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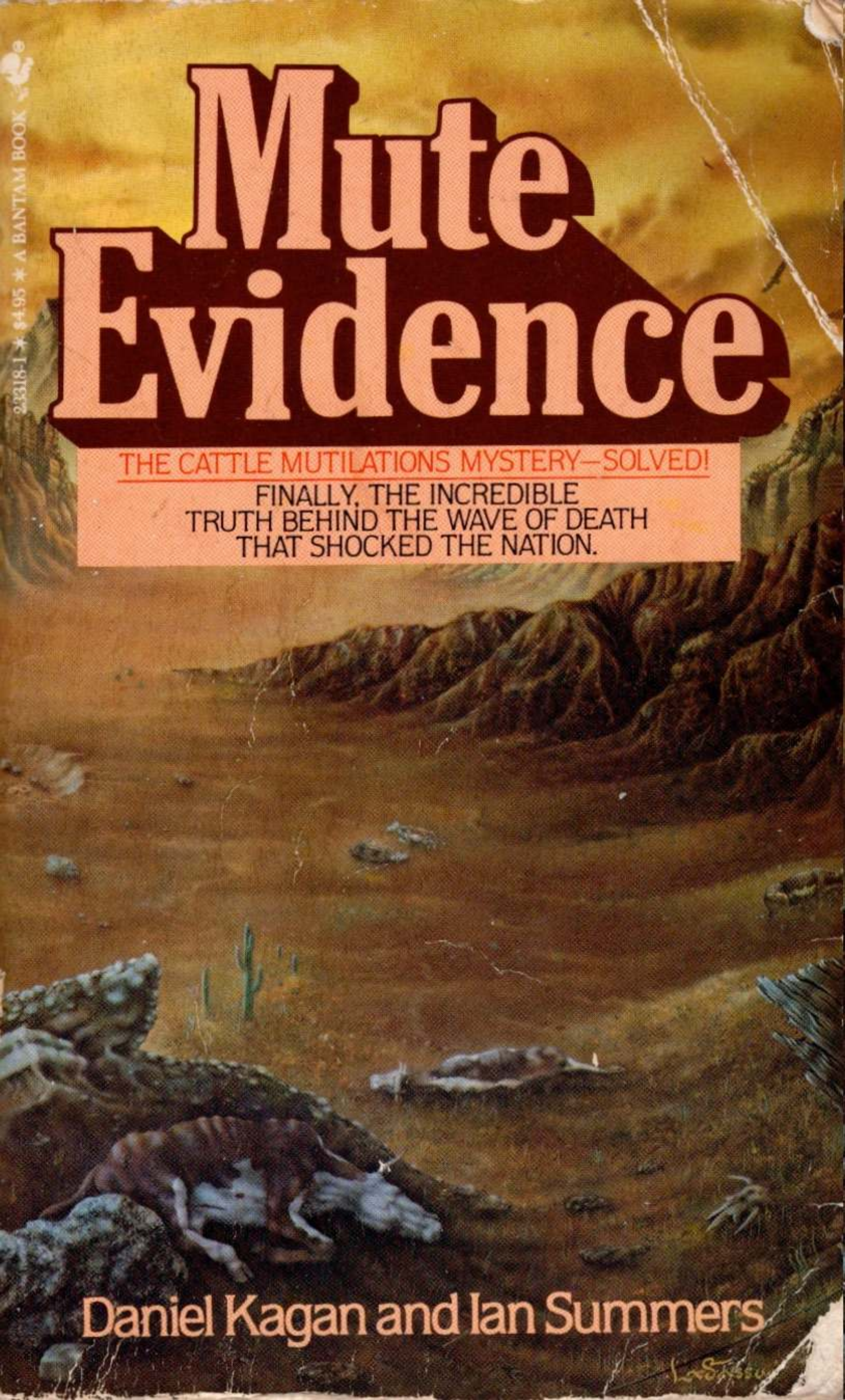
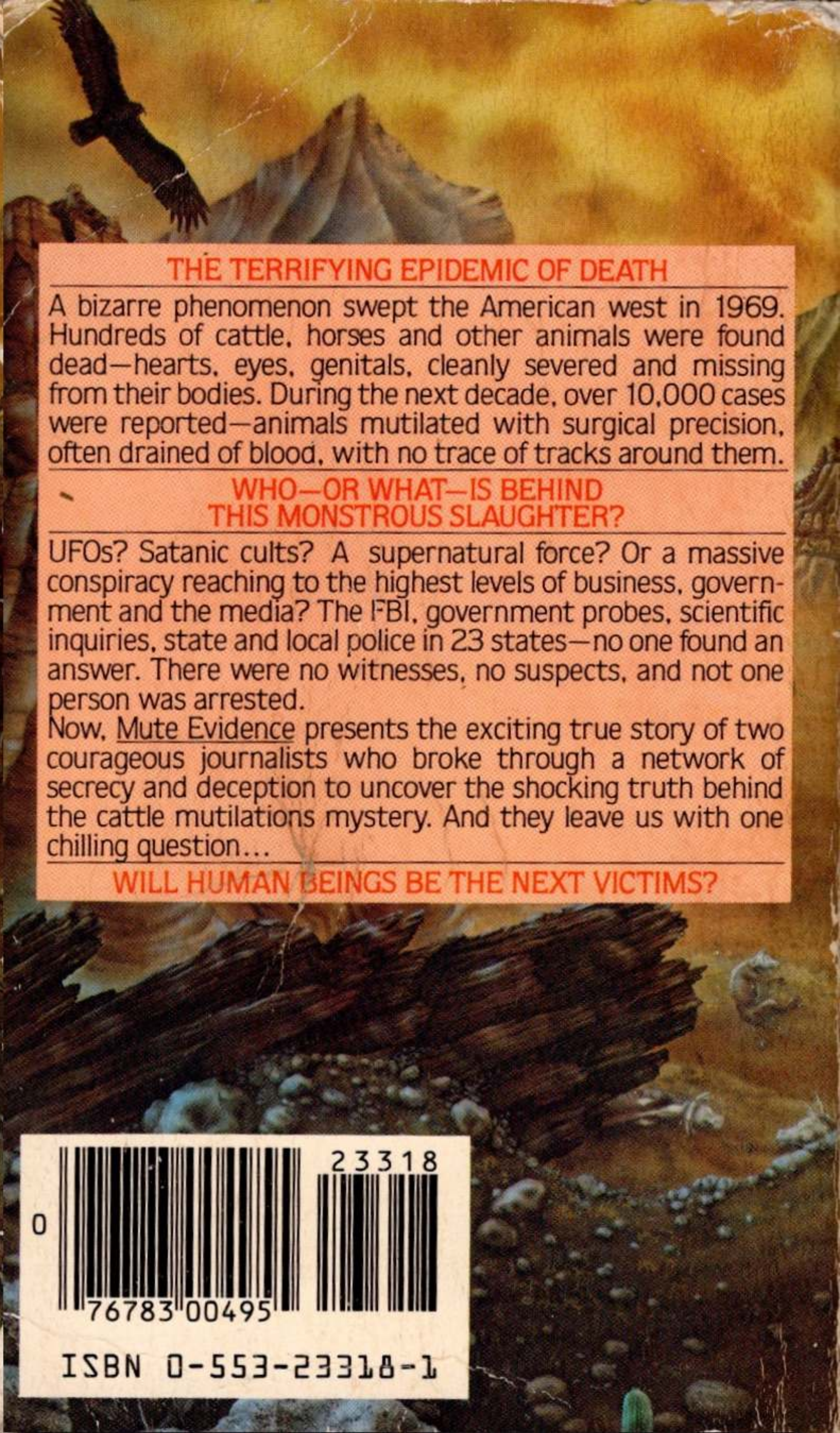


Mute Evidence

THE CATTLE MUTILATIONS MYSTERY—SOLVED!

FINALLY, THE INCREDIBLE
TRUTH BEHIND THE WAVE OF DEATH
THAT SHOCKED THE NATION.

Daniel Kagan and Ian Summers



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Mute Evidence is their astonishing report. It goes beyond the unexplainable to expose the grim reality of this mysterious phenomenon of death.

MUTE EVIDENCE

DANIEL KAGAN & IAN SUMMERS

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To Valerie, without whose love, support and unquestioning confidence this book would never have been written.

D.K.

To Micciah and Julie,
with love.
I.S.

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PROLOGUE

"Now comes the mystery."
Last words of Henry Ward Beecher,
American clergyman, writer, lecturer.

The cattle mutilation phenomenon cries out for colorful, riveting language. It is full of images: stiff, dead, grotesquely lacerated animals silently implying bloodthirsty activity by night; frantic county sheriffs desperately rushing around to capture seeming phantoms; angry ranchers patrolling their land with shotguns and CB radios; massive state police task forces shrugging home empty-handed; strange lights in the sky; veterinarians scratching their heads in bewilderment; mendacious scientists lying their way through a gigantic cover-up; a small army of dedicated cattle mutilation buffs ferreting their way across the country and through bushels of news clippings in search of an answer; mysterious figures in hooded robes.

Most of the writing about the mutilations and the context that surrounds them has tended to capture, usually accurately, the sense of confusion, unease, and often near panic that has permeated the areas where large numbers of cattle mutilations have been reported. Unfortunately, this tendency to reach for the easily coined image has ultimately shed no light on the actual nature of cattle mutilations, their true scope, the meaning of both public and official reactions to them, or even an acceptable explanation of their cause. There seems to have been very little cool, reasoned evaluation of the phenomenon, free of any strong need to prove a certain set of hypotheses or to cast the whole issue out as the result of mass hysteria and sensationalistic news reporting. The ultimate result of this is that no one seems to know exactly what the cattle mutilations are really all about.

In 1967, a horse named Snippy was found dead in a pasture in Alamosa, Colorado. The carcass was virtually denuded of flesh from the shoulders up. The horse's owner, who also happened to be a stringer for a local newspaper, immediately claimed that the animal had been killed and mutilated by the occupants of a flying saucer. The case generated a flurry of publicity, and even made the national wire services. Two veterinary pathologists who examined the animal's carcass concluded that it had died from natural causes and been partially devoured by roving predator and scavenger animals. The horse's owner countered that the wounds on the animal were surgical in appearance. The case was never conclusively resolved, at least not in a way that put the rumors surrounding it to rest. It became another curiosity, a two-paragraph tag item for big-city newspapers, for the time being.

Beginning around 1973, sporadic reports of mysteriously dead and apparently surgically mutilated cattle began to appear in local newspapers in Minnesota, South Dakota, and a few other Midwestern states. Ranchers reported these incidents to their county sheriffs, and in many cases the sheriffs and their deputies agreed that there was something godawful strange about those animals. Some people said it was the work of extraterrestrial beings in flying saucers. Some thought the culprits were less exotic: Satanic blood cults using the parts from the animals in pagan rituals.

Now, ranchers and farmers are used to finding their livestock dead, particularly among beef cattle, which roam over wide ranges and grazing lands. There is a statistically predictable yearly loss from many kinds of natural death: disease, accident, poisoning by plants, heat, drought, cold, dehydration, calf mortality, dietary deficiency. The USDA statistics for Minnesota for 1973, for example, indicate that of 6,393,000 cattle and calves in the state during the year, 1,928,000, or thirty percent of them, had died from these various causes by January 1, 1974. Why were these few instances singled out as remarkable?

For one thing, the cattle weren't just dead, they were missing only certain parts of the bodies, usually the tongue, sex organs, udder, anus, and rectum, and sometimes eyes and ears. But again, cattlemen all know that when an animal dies at pasture the carcass is usually attacked by predators and scavengers, coyotes, buzzards, and others, and they will eat exactly those parts when they start on a carcass. Why the concern?

"Well," the owners said, "this just didn't look like the varmint damage we've seen for years. The cuts were too clean, they looked surgical, expert. We think someone killed the cattle and did this to them." It seemed that whoever was doing it was pretty skillful. They left no tracks at the scene, no clues, and the animals seemed to have fallen over dead without a struggle, as if they were drugged, or killed in some highly efficient manner.

It was odd, disturbing. But still, it was sporadic, and no one outside the areas where the incidents were reported paid much attention to them. Then, in the spring and summer of 1974, farmers and ranchers all over Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa began reporting increasing numbers of these same mysteriously dead and surgically mutilated cattle. A new element was added: some of the animals, they said, had not only been killed and cut apart, but had also been somehow drained of blood. County sheriffs expressed their confusion; they had no idea who was doing this, and they could not catch them. Ranchers formed vigilante patrols and rode the range at night, armed to the teeth. Elected politicians began acknowledging the seriousness of the incidents. Statewide conferences were called by law enforcement officials to find ways to contend with the mutilation problem. Nothing did any good. The reports kept coming in. By September of 1974 there had been over a hundred reported cattle mutilations across the three states, and the reports had spread to Oklahoma as well.

There was also a new element added to the mystery. People began spotting what appeared to be mysterious unmarked helicopters in the air around areas where there had been reports of mutilated cattle. It was believed that these aircraft might be involved in the killings. The Air National Guard became involved in the investigation after one of its helicopters was peppered with bullets by frightened ranchers.

With the advent of the helicopter sightings there were whisperings that maybe the cattle were being killed and mutilated as part of a secret government or military project, perhaps something to do with the illegal testing of chemical and biological warfare materials. Necropsies of the animals performed by the veterinary laboratories at state universities revealed that the reportedly mutilated animals had died of natural causes and been ravaged after death by predators. The ranchers, local lawmen, and some politicians did not accept this. The evidence in front of them told them different. Whispers of a cover-up began to be heard.

The story finally appeared in the September 30, 1974, issue of *Newsweek*. Two new words were coined. Cattle mysteriously killed and surgically deprived of their tongues, sex organs, anuses, udders, ears, and eyes came to be referred to as "classic mutilations" by a small but growing band of independent investigators around the country who had undertaken an investigation of the mysterious occurrences; and a concentrated infestation of mutilated cattle in a given state was dubbed a mutilation "wave."

Within eight months, in the spring of 1975, the largest and most intensively investigated and publicized cattle mutilation wave ever began in eastern Colorado. At the same time, there were mutilation waves in Montana, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. Reports of mutilated cattle started coming out of Texas and Arizona. Later they would crop up in Oregon and Washington as well.

In Colorado, the local news media gave the cattle mutilations intense and immediate coverage. Nowhere before or since had the cattle mutilations been charted, counted, followed, and discussed more completely. The eastern half of the state went into a turmoil the like of which is usually produced only by a natural disaster or a mass murder. Ranchers clamored for help, and county sheriffs publicly vowed to catch the cattle mutilators. Rewards were posted which ultimately totaled nearly $25,000.

Still, no one could explain who was committing the cattle mutilations or why. There was talk of cults again, but also open speculation about government conspiracies. Secret chemical warfare testing, the monitoring of undisclosed radiation leakage into the environment. Mysterious helicopters were sighted, both during the day and at night.

And there were reports, through 1976, of strange lights in the skies after dark in places where mutilated cattle had been found: UFOs; and there were lots of people, including some newspaper reporters, who didn't hesitate to declare that there were extraterrestrials killing cows. The governor of Colorado pledged his attention to the mystery, and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation entered the case to help the sheriffs. The CBI engaged the services of the veterinary diagnostic laboratory at Colorado State University to analyze and necropsy the carcasses of reportedly mutilated cattle. The lab results repeated those of the university labs in other states the years before; animals dead of natural causes, then chewed apart by predators after death.

But the lab also turned up a handful of cases in which the cattle *had* been cut with sharp instruments, but *after* death by natural causes. The CBI said these were the work of "copycat" pranksters motivated to have some grisly fun by the news coverage of the mutilations. The mutilation reports continued to come in.

The county sheriffs raged, the ranchers dismissed the CBI's findings. The newspapers and TV reflected this rejection of the CBI's investigation. There were cries of "cover-up!" The Army and the Air Force were accused. They denied any involvement. Some sheriffs and ranchers began to report that some of the mutilated animals had been found with their legs broken, indicating that they had been hoisted into the air, mutilated, and then dropped to the earth. Again, some said it was UFOs. But no one could produce a definitive solution to the mystery.

The helicopter sightings and reports of mutilated cattle leaked over the border into New Mexico in late 1975 and 1976. By now, word had spread to ranchers all over the country about the strange cattle mutilations, and they reluctantly added them to the long list of other destructive forces, like bad weather and disease, that plague a rancher with threats to his livestock, his bread and butter. There were reports out of New Mexico that there had been mutilated animals found there, too, with broken legs, and that the carcasses had also been surrounded by what looked like the odd tripod-patterned marks of the landing gear of some sort of aircraft, something that flew and could lift a thousand-pound bull into the air and neatly slice off its genitals. Again, strange lights were seen in the sky.

Meanwhile, the underground network of independent cattle mutilation investigators had been collecting all the information they could lay their hands on. These people would quickly learn of a cattle mutilation wave and immediately contact the local law enforcement people and newspapers and offer the information in their files to help in the investigations. They had also begun to formulate and publicize several theories about who might be performing the mutilations and why. Eagerly, they were welcomed by lawmen who had exhausted all their immediate avenues of investigation, and by local news media which needed something to tell their audiences.

By 1978 there was a quarterly publication about cattle mutilations put out by an outfit in Texas called Project Stigma, run by a man named Tom Adams. The newsletter was called *Stigmata*, and cops from all over the country went to Adams for help because he seemed to know more than anyone else about cattle mutilations. Adams obliged all inquiries; he was glad to help.

Through 1977 and 1978 there were no mutilation waves as large as those in Colorado and Montana in 1975 and 1976, but there was a steady stream of reports from ranchers all over the country. Some people, including some nationally known investigative journalists and some network television news reporters, wondered whether cattle mutilations might be a serious national concern. In 1978 there was a series of bizarre mutilation incidents in northern New Mexico. Tissue samples from some of the cattle were analyzed by Los Alamos Scientific Laboratories, birthplace of the first atomic bomb, a high-level government research facility. A private laboratory also performed some tests on the tissues of a reportedly mutilated bull, and the man who submitted the samples for analysis informed the press that the test results indicated that the animal had been killed by a massive dose of microwave radiation. Mutilation reports spread throughout the state of New Mexico. In 1978 and 1979 there was a mutilation wave in Arkansas as well, and some people began to wonder if the presence of underground Titan missile silos in the state might be connected in some way to the dead cattle.

In the spring of 1979, former U.S. Senator Harrison Schmitt of New Mexico co-sponsored a national conference on cattle mutilations in Albuquerque. He wanted the United States Department of Justice to assign the FBI to the case. Then-Attorney General Griffin Bell had expressed an interest in investigating the cattle mutilations.

A few months before Schmitt's conference, a New Mexico district attorney had applied for a large grant from the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to fund a large-scale investigation of cattle mutilations in New Mexico. In May of 1979, this grant, almost $50,000, was awarded, and Ken Rommel, a retired FBI agent with thirty years of experience, ten of them in counter-espionage, was assigned to head the investigation.

By the middle of 1979, there had not been another major mutilation wave in the United States, although the reports were still coming in by the dozens from all around the country. However, in 1979 there were over a hundred reports of mysteriously mutilated cattle recorded by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police over the border in the province of Alberta, Canada, around the city of Calgary. There was a second wave there in 1980. It was at this point that we began to investigate the cattle mutilation phenomenon. This book is the story of our experiences, and the sum of what we learned.

At one point we thought we weren't coming back, either. It was too exciting in there, there were too many tantalizing roads to explore in that country of the mind, too many half-clues that seemed to lead out to plots, and immense conspiracies, and fascinating new kinds of realities.

The complexity of the phenomenon is almost overwhelming. There are too many elements involved, too much ground to cover: twenty-eight states, hundreds of lawmen, hundreds of ranchers, hundreds of witnesses, too many people to interview and too many subjects with which you need to make at least a nodding acquaintance: veterinary pathology; biogeochemistry; radiation biology; police science; Fortean investigation; helicopter technology; the life and range of the bacteria genus *Clostridia;* the number and location of all the military bases, nuclear reactors, and uranium mines in the United States and Canada; Satanic cults; the character of the American Westerner; the nature of mass hysteria; the role of the local media in influencing public consciousness; the spiritual vacuum in our society and the way people try to fill it with any available mystery; the mechanics of prejudice and stubbornness in the scientific establishment; the extraordinary role of conspiracy-consciousness in the American mind since the Kennedy and King assassinations.

There are nerves in the cattle mutilation phenomenon that lead directly to Three Mile Island, Watergate, Love Canal, and the Church Committee's 1975 revelations about the horrors indulged in by the CIA. The mutilation phenomenon can tell you a lot about Americans' loss of faith in institutions that have turned out to be inept, hollow, harmful, and bureaucratically crippled in thought. It is also a story about the nature of information: the way it travels, changes, and evolves, the way good information can turn into worthless information depending on who held it last.

BOOK ONE

I. FALLING OFF THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

*"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not
all sleep, but we shall all be changed."*
I Corinthians, *15:51*.

1

Three Pieces Of Paper

In December of 1979, Ian Summers was a guest on the Tony Larson Show, a midnight-to-five A.M. radio program out of KOA Radio in Denver, Colorado. Larson runs a phone-in format. He sets up the topic of the night, and then people call in to talk with his guests or deliver their opinions on subjects far from commonplace, daylight subjects.

That night, Larson's audience did not need much prompting before they began to heat up the phone lines. Summers, a book packager, designer, and art director, was on the show as part of a book promotion tour. He was in to talk about a recently published book he had co-authored— *Barlowe's Guide to Extraterrestrials*, an illustrated "field guide" with paintings of alien beings which had been created by the authors of well-known science fiction novels. The book was fanciful and meant to be entertaining, but Larson's listeners took the subject of extraterrestrial beings very seriously. All night, the switchboard relayed their stories of UFO sightings, claimed contacts with extraterrestrial beings, and opinions about what the flying saucer people might really want from us.

Around three-thirty in the morning, a call came in from Tennessee. The caller's voice was pillowed in static.

"I'm a sheriff here in Tennessee," he said. "I've been told not to discuss this with anyone, so I can't tell you my name. I'd like to know—do you believe that cattle mutilations are the work of extraterrestrials?"

Summers's answer was glib. "I know what extraterrestrials might be, but what is a cattle mutilation?"

The caller proceeded to explain. After the show, Larson filled in some details. The incident became a curiosity, a strange anecdote that was soon forgotten.

The following month Summers noticed an article in *Omni* magazine, circulation 843,538, a slick, successful journal of popular science and futurology which regularly publishes the work of leading scientific lights like Robert Jastrow, Isaac Asimov, and Carl Sagan. The article was entitled "Death on the Range," and it was in *Omni*'s "UFO Update" section. The article, written by Harry Lebelson, was all about cattle mutilations. Apparently the anonymous sheriff from Tennessee was not alone in his beliefs.

The article opened with a quick synopsis of the strange case of Snippy the horse. It went on to state that at least eight thousand cattle had been "systematically mutilated with surgical precision" over the last twelve years throughout an area about one-third the size of the United States. Extensive research had failed to provide clues to their cause. All qualified authorities who had looked into the cases had struck out.

Lebelson then mentioned that U.S. Senator Harrison (Jack) Schmitt, the Republican Senator from New Mexico, had said, "One of the most extraordinary facts of this problem is that the group or groups responsible for the mutilation killings have shown almost unprecedented discipline. There have been no leaks or informants to assist the state and local law enforcement officials in their investigative efforts, at least so far as I am aware." This made Summers sit up straight.

Schmitt is no fool. He is also not a lightweight: chairman of the "Americans for Reagan" movement, which challenged the constitutionality of Federal laws governing the raising of funds related to presidential campaigning, Schmitt probably had more than a small part in electing Ronald Reagan to the presidency. Schmitt holds a B.S. from Cal Tech and a Ph.D. in geology from Harvard. He is well-traveled: in 1972, Jack Schmitt was the pilot of the Lunar Module of Apollo 17. It was his responsibility to land the mission on the moon and bring it back safely.

Schmitt, the article claimed, was so concerned about the cattle mutilations reported in New Mexico in 1978 that he had sponsored a national conference about them at the Albuquerque Public Library on April 20, 1979. He was trying to get the United States Department of Justice to appropriate funds for an investigation that would include computer analysis of the temporal and geographical distribution of reported cattle mutilations. He wanted the FBI on the case.

This was no voice on the phone from Tennessee. This was a young politician with a great deal to lose by attaching his name to anything marginal or absurd. And if Schmitt was involved, cattle mutilations were obviously serious business.

The article also revealed that the office of the district attorney in the First Judicial District of New Mexico had applied for and received a $40,000 grant from the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (L.E.A.A.) to conduct an investigation into the mutilations in that state. The losses in New Mexico attributed to cattle mutilation were given as $45,000 over the preceeding three years. The national loss of cattle to mutilations was stated as two-and-a-half million dollars since 1974.

Several key elements in the mystery were mentioned. Predatory animals that generally eat up dead cows "will not go near the mutilated carcasses." No tracks, footprints, or traces of activity had been found around any of the carcasses. Animals had been found dead and dismembered near ranch houses, yet no one had heard any noises, and the family dogs (most ranchers like to keep at least two or three) did not bark as they normally would have if intruders were on the property. The mutilated animals are found drained of blood. "UFO activity has been reported both before and after mutilation activity has occurred." Unmarked "mystery helicopters" were sighted in the vicinity of the mutilations, "often hovering over the mutilated carcasses."

The article considered the three theories in favor concerning the cause of the mutilations. Summed up as "saucers, Satanists, or the CIA," each was aired.

Perhaps devil cultists were killing the animals, draining their blood and removing the organs for use in Satanic worship rites. Cult ritual sites complete with fire pits and stones marked with the name of the goddess Isis had been found in Montana in 1975 during a wave of cattle mutilations in that state. No connections had been established between them and the mutilations.

Lebelson presented the views of Dr. Richard Sigismund, a psychologist from Boulder, Colorado. "Cultists? If so we are dealing with a large and very well funded nationwide organization . . . whose audacity must be matched by seemingly inexhaustible financial resources and outstanding scientific and technical capabilities." Sigismund went on to suggest that a group this size would have to leave clues and traces. Since none had apparently been found, the answer must lie elsewhere.

Who could conduct such an expensive, sophisticated, far-flung operation without leaving traces? The government, obviously, Lebelson pointed out. He presented the opinions of a veterinarian, a toxicologist, and a retired electronic instrumentation designer, each of whom had had a brush with mutilated animals. The veterinarian postulated that the animal he had seen had been laid down with a dose of powerful muscle-relaxant drugs. Lebelson underlined this by pointing out that the doctor was not alone, that there had been "widespread use of tranquilizers throughout the country as part of the mutilation process." The toxicologist noted that the parts taken from the animals, particularly the udder and the blood, would be perfect subject organs to analyze if the mutilators were looking for "exotic substances" that had been induced into the animal before death.

The instrumentation scientist, Howard Burgess of New Mexico, went so far as to suggest that possibly the government was using other people's livestock to test microwave weaponry, laser apparatus, or strains of bacteria for warfare purposes. Who else had the money for helicopters and a large enough work force to kill and cut apart so many animals, over so wide a range, for so many years? Who else was adept enough at clandestine techniques to avoid leaving clues? Given the CIA's track record, the plausibility of this left a brassy taste in the mouth.

The only hole in this formulation, the article pointed out, was the trail of carcasses left behind. If the government were mounting a secret testing program, why would they leave behind enough evidence to tempt curious researchers? It was practically an invitation to some smart fool to figure out the mystery and blow the top off the secret operation. Perhaps, then, the carcasses were left there specifically to tempt human curiosity. Perhaps they were a message of some sort. Who would send such a message?

Dr. Sigismund's comments provided his answer: " . . . Well-equipped, highly capable, airborne entities using unidentified aircraft . . . UFOs."

With one finger pointing toward UFOs, Lebelson ended his article by affirming that "one must not draw unwarranted conclusions concerning the nature of the phenomenon, nor try to second guess those responsible as to the reasons for their actions. *To do so might possibly play into the hands of those, who, over the years, have managed to elude detection.*" (Italics ours)

Summers was a graduate of several problem-solving think-tank operations during the '60s and early '70s. There was nothing he liked better than a nice, seemingly insoluble dilemma, and the cattle mutilations business looked like one of these. There was also nothing he liked better than to dive into a problem with a like-minded fellow traveler for company. He called Daniel Kagan, a freelance journalist with a deep background in the sciences, a fondness for mysteries and cover-ups, and a trial lawyer's mentality about research and fact verification. Summers figured he would be the right partner for an investigation into the cattle mutilation phenomenon, but before there was time to digest the implications of the *Omni* article, another document landed in the office. It was the January 21, 1980, issue of *Newsweek*.

Like *Omni, Newsweek* is not known to waste its high-priced editorial space on marginal issues usually covered in pulp flying saucer magazines. The issue contained a short column entitled "Tracking the Cattle Mutilators," which said that seven mutilations had recently taken place in Iowa, and the Iowa State Department of Criminal Investigation thought it had some suspects. The agency had found some houses whose walls were covered with Satanic symbols. They believed a local cult was responsible. A group of helpful "white witches" from the Iowa Witches Association in Des Moines had offered their aid to the police. A University of South Dakota sociologist said it was all a case of mild mass hysteria. The predators did it, he said. *Newsweek* noted the Federal L.E.A.A. grant given to New Mexico to investigate the mutilations in that state. The director of the Iowa DCI suggested attacking the mutilation problem on a national basis.

This was endorsement, a national issue, a problem large enough to command the attention of politicians and the commitment of sizable sums of money. The legitimate news media were covering it. It had a faint smell of conspiracy about it, more government dirty work. Neither of us had had much interest in flying saucers, devil cults, or even conspiracies, but it didn't matter. This was too good. We were hooked.

A friend directed us to a book entitled *Messengers of Deception,* by Dr. Jacques Vallee. Vallee is respectable. A bona fide Ph.D. in computer science with a master's degree in astrophysics, he is one of the very few professional scientists to address the UFO phenomenon. He was the model for the character Lacombe, the French scientist and UFO expert who masterminds the Earth's first contact with space aliens, in the film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."

Messengers of Deception contains a chapter about cattle mutilations. In it, Vallee captures much of the mood and atmosphere that overwhelms areas where waves of mutilations have taken place. He also accurately describes the cycle of involvement and mystery that characterizes it: "Since no one has been arrested and convicted for (cattle mutilation), many farmers now assume that the perpetrators were either creatures from outer space or secret agents on the payroll of government agencies. . . . The problem . . . involves the same patterns as UFO landings, . . . its social repercussions follow the same general principles: incidents of high strangeness are reported by credible witnesses; apparent 'evidence' found at the site turns out to be spurious, worthless, or misleading; authorities become involved but fail to provide an adequate explanation; the press amplifies the mystery; hoaxers and curiosity seekers complicate it; finally, academic researchers issue explanations that witnesses and knowledgeable investigators throw into the garbage, but which impress the scientific community enough to discourage it from probing any deeper into the real nature of the problem. The ultimate result is to spread a feeling of anguish and unformulated expectation throughout the area where the events have taken place: expectation of something dreadful that will come from the sky, something no one on earth understands, something swift and pitiless that will reshape human life."*

Vallee suggests that the mutilations are a form of terrorism employed by the same very human people he believes may be creating the UFO manifestations to build a new base of highly manipulable converts and believers for some future purpose.

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*Vallee, Jacques, *Messengers of Deception,* p. 163. Bantam 1979

Vallee's heavily documented book was an added bonus for us. Using his footnotes, we began contacting all the individuals mentioned in his book and in the *Omni* and *Newsweek* articles. We wrote to an organization in Paris, Texas, with the evocative name of Project Stigma, that turns out a quarterly newsletter exclusively about cattle mutilations. Letters and phone calls traveled to the governor's office in Colorado and to a Colorado man named Fred Smith, who had written a book about the mutilations which Vallee had quoted extensively. We requested a copy of the transcript of Senator Schmitt's 1979 conference from the Albuquerque Public Library.

We telephoned Gabe Valdez, an officer of the New Mexico State Police. Valdez's beat is a high, arid stretch of northern New Mexico, just south of the Colorado border. His home and headquarters are on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation. In a pinch, the Apache Tribal Police become his troops. Desolate and far-flung are inadequate words to capture the vast emptiness of Gabe Valdez's domain.

Valdez had been investigating the cattle mutilations on his own for three years, ever since several of the ranchers in his district lost animals to mutilations: a few in 1976, 1977, and 1978. One of these had become a landmark case in cattle mutilation literature. He had been working with Howard Burgess, the retired instrumentation designer who had been mentioned in the *Omni* article as a proponent of the idea that cattle mutilations might be the work of some secret government agency. He felt that since the U.S. had outlawed chemical and biological warfare research in 1970, and the Russians had been developing their capabilities in that area in the meantime, the U.S. government was secretly working to catch up. The mutilations were part of their clandestine experiment.

Valdez was cooperative, but guarded, saying that "ninety-eight percent of the public is ignorant about the cattle mutilations, and they should be made aware of them." He stressed the need for a multi-disciplinary task force of police, scientists, and other experts to attack the mutilation problem. The government should fund it. He felt that Project Stigma in Texas was doing some fine work with the available evidence.

"Everything they say is accurate," he assured us.

He acknowledged that the L.E.A.A. grant given to the First District Attorney's Office in New Mexico was a step in the right direction, but he seemed to lack confidence in the investigator designated to lead it. Ken Rommel was an ex-FBI agent, and

Valdez was unsure where his sympathies lay. Rumor had it that Rommel was out to debunk the mutilations with the taxpayer's money by discrediting people who believed there might be something to them.

A few days later, we telephoned Fred Smith, the Colorado man whose book had been quoted by Jacques Vallee. Mr. Smith talked eagerly. He felt the mutilations were connected to after-death phenomena. He was deeply involved with the Swedenborg Foundation. Smith told us he believed that the cattle mutilations were symbolic messages from the spirit world where everyone goes when they die. The spirits were benign, he said, but they were trying to send us a warning about our failures and shortcomings as a species. UFOs, too, were "death angels" from the other side. Smith talked about the near-death experiences described in the work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross. He had published his book himself. He promised to send us a copy.

Still working the Colorado territory, we contacted the office of Governor Richard Lamm and asked for any information they had on the mutilations in that state in 1975. A thin package arrived. In it were: a copy of a letter to the governor from the residents of Washington County, Colorado, requesting that he order the involvement of the National Guard in the effort to solve the cattle mutilations; a short copy of the Colorado Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) conclusions in their investigation into the mutilations; and a manuscript copy of a newspaper editorial written by Dane Edwards, the former editor of a small Colorado newspaper, the Brush, Colorado, *Banner.* Undated and uncorrected, the manuscript accused the state of bureaucratic ineptitude in its efforts on the mutilation case. It suggested the strong possibility that a Satanic cult was involved, and that the cult was made up of members of the U.S. military. This explained the helicopters sighted in conjunction with the multilations, the manuscript said.

We contacted Carl Whiteside, the Deputy Director of the CBI and the man who had led the statewide investigation into the 1975 mutilations. He gave some advice right off.

"Getting firm evidence on these things will be like nailing jelly to a wall," he said. "Everybody who has gotten involved with the mutilations has come away more confused than they were when they went in, including us."

Whiteside hadn't heard about any mutilated cattle in Colorado since 1976. He had concluded that most of the mutilations reported in 1975 throughout the state were the work of predators on animals that had died from natural causes. He felt that the publicity and panic during 1975 had led some vandals and hoaxers to mutilate the few animals that Colorado State University had confirmed as cut by knives. He called these mutilations "copycats." His conclusions were supported by the lab reports from Colorado State, and by his consultations with predator experts from the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Whiteside directed us to Dr. Albert McChesney, the veterinarian at CSU who had been in charge of the necropsies done on reported mutilations brought to the College of Veterinary Medicine by the CBI.

McChesney was succinct. "UFO sightings are hogwash, but cattle mutilations do occur. There is a much smaller number than claimed."

Of the 200 reports logged by the CBI, thirty-five carcasses or samples had made it to McChesney's lab. Of these, nine had borne cut marks that were definitely knife wounds. Two others had had clean-cut wounds *and* signs of predator damage. The rest were either too decomposed to be analyzed or were obviously done by scavenging carnivores.

"We found no evidence of the use of rays or odd weapons," he said, and concluded that whoever did this to the animals simply looked around until they found a dead cow and then went to work.

McChesney's readings of the events in Colorado went like this: the first mutilated animals were found with their udders cut off and their tongues removed. Hysteria swept into the region. Kids or hoaxers began cutting up already-dead cows to have some fun with the authorities, and the thing got out of hand.

"The cutting was very professional," he said. The culprit knew what he was doing. The later ones had been sloppy.

He acknowledged the role of politics. "The sheriffs were worried about reelection. They helped stir things up. Law enforcement thinks we university people are susceptible to being pulled in by a cover-up. Those rumors about secret government operations didn't help. What could the military hope to prove by leaving all those dead animals around?"

2

The Schmitt Transcript

The 122-page transcript of Senator Schmitt's April, 1979, Albuquerque conference on cattle mutilations finally arrived.

In his opening remarks, Senator Schmitt had said:

"There are few activities more dangerous than an unsolved pattern of crime. There is always the potential for such crimes to escalate in frequency and severity if allowed to go unsolved and unpunished. Such a dangerous pattern of crime is the mutilation killing of thousands of cattle, horses, and other animals over the past several years throughout many states. These crimes are obviously continuing despite the excellent efforts of state and local law enforcement officials and the growing publicity the mutilation killings have received."

This was a senator talking, not some flying-saucer nut.

"In the last five years—and probably longer—in at least fifteen states animals have been killed and systematically mutilated for no apparent purpose, by persons unknown," he went on. The only problem was that no Federal action could be taken unless mutilations could be proven to have occurred on Federal land. Since a few mutilations had occurred on Indian land, the Albuquerque FBI office would now monitor the phenomenon.

The first speakers at the conference were David Perkins, introduced as the head of the Department of Research of the Libre School in Farisita, Colorado; Manuel Gomez, the New Mexico rancher whose mutilated animals had been investigated by Gabe Valdez; Dr. Claire Hibbs of the New Mexico State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory; Dr. Richard Sigismund of Boulder, Colorado, who had been quoted in the *Omni* magazine article; and Dr. James Prine of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

David Perkins introduced himself as the director of AMP, the Animal Mutilations Probe, which he described as a "nationwide network of independent researchers, law officials, scientists, and journalists." It was a "clearinghouse for the systematic collection of data relating to the animal mutilations."

Perkins holds degrees from Yale University and the State University of New York at Buffalo. He described himself as a sociologist interested in studying what he called "aberrant mass phenomena—cults, religious sects, mass delusions, fads, and other belief systems that lie outside the mainstream." Since 1975, he had been focusing on the mutilations, abandoning all other projects. He characterized the mutilations as "an outright frontal assault on all our notions of reality," and noted that "the mutilations seemed to say to us, 'Everything you know is wrong.'" He stated he felt that the answer to the mutilations mystery "may well have something to do with man's survival on this planet." He suggested taking a "very long, hard look at the possibility that UFOs could be involved with these mutilations." He also noted that the "placement of the animals in the landscape" suggested they might be test animals for some agency. Their locations "show an interesting correlation between where they lie and sources of environmental problems, shall we say." He offered to display a map on which he'd plotted these proximity relationships.

Manuel Gomez spoke next. He referred to the cattle mutilation problem as "Cattlegate," obviously implying some kind of cover-up. He offered his thanks to the senator.

Next at the podium was Dr. Claire Hibbs, who'd been in touch with veterinary pathologists from Kansas and Nebraska who had examined earlier mutilations in those states. Hibbs separated the mutilations into three classes: those committed by coyotes and other predators after the cattle had died natural deaths; those cattle that had actually been mutilated with a sharp instrument, dying from natural causes prior to being cut; and those he described as "...kids—not kids, but young men in South Dakota that did some mutilation for the fun of it and the prank." Hibbs suggested that a group of scientific people be detailed "to study each case entirely."

Dr. Richard Sigismund followed and informed the audience that he had been investigating UFOs for over twenty years. He immediately compared the cattle mutilations to the UFO phenomenon and cited instances in Missouri and in Dulce, New Mexico, in which many witnesses had sighted UFOs in areas where cattle mutilations had occurred. The New Mexico incidents were the ones investigated by officer Gabe Valdez. Near the end of his comments he said, "Try as we may, it now becomes increasingly difficult to link the cattle mutilations to the work of either cultists or coyotes, however attractive that refuge may be." He was obviously convinced the culprits rode in flying saucers, and when he finished his remarks was roundly applauded.

Dr. James Prine, a veterinary pathologist, spoke next. Sent out by Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory to examine six reportedly mutilated carcasses, Prine said that although the animals he examined had been reported as mutilations, he determined that they had actually been torn apart by predators.

Then the podium was thrown open to speakers from among the guests. A gentleman named Tommy Roy Blann took the microphone and said he had devoted twenty-two years to the study of UFOs, twelve of those to the study of cattle mutilations as well. It was not a new phenomenon; cases had been recorded as far back as 1810 in Scotland and England. He listed eight cases reported in Colorado in 1967, including the famous Snippy the horse. He spoke of animals found in Canada in 1969 in the middle of circles of flattened brush, with burned spots on their necks and backs.

"I've got material that's unbelievable," he said.

Blann described animals found in Goolma, New South Wales, Australia. According to Blann, "Their necks were broke, certain sections were tore off, some of the heads were twisted three hundred sixty degrees." He said he had sheriffs' reports from the United States describing similarly damaged animals in this country, "where there was a force of tremendous power has rotated their heads three hundred sixty degrees."

Blann said he had personally investigated cases in which cattle had been found to have been dropped from a height, "because of the back pelvis bones and so forth have been broke, front legs have been broken. They have definitely been dropped from a height." He spoke of mystery helicopters.

After Blann finished, Tom Adams spoke as director of Project Stigma in Paris, Texas, and publisher of the newsletter *Stigmata*. Adams concentrated on the issue of the mystery helicopters reported in conjunction with the mutilations, offering a catalogue of two hundred sightings to those present.

Next was Dr. Henry Montieth, an engineering physicist at Sandia Laboratories in Albuquerque, a government research facility located on the grounds of Kirtland Air Force Base. He'd been working on the mutilation problem on his own for ten years, and said the American Indians might be a helpful source of information. He told a story about a cattle mutilation on an Indian reservation. "We investigated one just recently; they didn't want us to look at the cow. And they let us look at the cow for a few minutes, and they buried the cow immediately, you know? They said that this cow had been mutilated by the star people, and the star people know what they are doing, and they shouldn't question it. This is what they said."

New Mexico State Police Officer Gabe Valdez followed Monteith to the podium, the only speaker at the conference to command a round of applause before he said a word. Valdez spoke of thousands of dollars in property damage from the mutilations and demanded that those responsible for the crimes be brought to justice.

Valdez placed no stock in the idea of predators as the cause of the mutilations. He said he had investigated thirty of them personally, and spoke of carcasses lifted up by the legs, showing clamp marks where they had been snatched.

"Every time we have a mutilation," he said, "there seems to be an increased activity of aircraft." He noted that twenty-three states had had mutilated cattle reported.

After several more speakers, Dr. Richard Sigismund was invited back to the microphone. "I see the cattle mutilation problem as being headed under the general UFO problem, for what few clues we have concerning those responsible for the mutilations suggest that we are dealing with well-equipped, highly capable airborne entities."

He noted that there was no government agency available to "receive, investigate, and evaluate" information on UFOs. He recommended that a Federal UFO Investigation Center be set up.

A Doctor Hurtak from Lab Nine in New York, a colleague of Dr. Andrija Puharich, who'd promoted the career of Uri Geller, rose. He addressed himself to the ancient legends of visitation to the earth by "sky people," seeming space beings, depicted in old Tibetan paintings and in the legends of Mexican Indian shamans.

Eloy Martinez, the District Attorney of the First Judicial District of New Mexico, was the next to speak. It was his office which had applied to the L.E.A.A. for a grant to investigate the mutilations. He said he had asked for $50,000. He requested formal endorsement for the proposal from the FBI. He mentioned Ken Rommel, an FBI agent in Santa Fe at the time, as the possible director for the investigation, if the grant was approved.

The following speaker was another man we had spoken with, Carl Whiteside, Deputy Director of the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. He acknowledged the national scope of the problem, but said that authorities in Oregon, Wyoming, Idaho, and Nebraska had concluded that the reported mutilations had been the work of predators.

"The best thing you can do is contain your investigation based upon factual conclusions. I'm a firm believer," he warned, "that the investigator who hypothecates a situation, hypothesizes, and then goes about supporting his hypothesis, may neglect serious facts along the way."

He commended the idea of involving scientists in the New Mexico investigation and offered the services of the CBI to anyone who was interested.

Senator Schmitt summed up, cautioning all present about the possible consequences of publicizing the mutilation issue. Publicity could increase public awareness and open new sources of information, but it could also lead pranksters, hoaxers, and unstable people to duplicate what they heard about in the newspapers and on television.

Schmitt's conference had been attended by people from all over the country, and it served to drive home the importance of the phenomenon. The meeting was attended by representatives of institutions that don't fly off to every public gathering: the FBI, district attorneys, scientists.

The transcript was also a Yellow Pages for the cattle mutilation community. It had names and places of origin. The phone numbers were easy to obtain. We began to talk to the underground.

3

Contacting The Network

The first member of the underground we called was David Perkins of the Animal Mutilations Probe in Farisita, Colorado. He knew Tom Adams at Project Stigma in Paris, Texas, and they often exchanged information. Adams, he said, tried to confine himself to collecting and disseminating information through

the *Stigmata* newsletter. Perkins, however, was a theorist and, like a good attorney, he could play the mutilation case from any angle, prosecution or defense, to make it work.

He talked about the mutilations as test animals for some experimental program or monitoring effort. Perkins had developed what he thought were significant proximity relationships between concentrations of mutilated cattle and certain key features in the surrounding landscape. These were the basis of the map he had referred to at the Albuquerque conference.

"There have been waves of mutes* near several nuclear facilities," he said.

"They've shown up in areas where there are nuclear reactors," he continued, "and also in places where there's radioactive pollution; near the tailing dumps from uranium processing facilities, and near the uranium mines themselves."

He pointed out that uranium was mined in Colorado and New Mexico, and both states had been hit by cattle mutilations. He was trying to work out a "downwind, downwater" hypothesis: if mutilated animals tended to occur in clusters in areas downwind or downwater from nuclear reactors or radiation-producing sources, then animals might have been collecting chronic radiation damage in their tissues from atomic pollution washed or wafted to them. Perhaps, then, the mutilators were killing the animals and taking tissue samples to be tested for contamination. Maybe they were monitoring the level of radioactive pollution in those areas.

The process was secret, of course, because the public wouldn't know about the contamination. If the word got out, the outcry would blast the roof off every agency building in Washington, D.C. This would also explain why the mutilated animals were those of private ranchers and farmers. The mutilator/monitors had to take their samples where the pollution was.

There were other proximity relationships, Perkins assured us. Mutilation waves seemed to occur in states with high concentrations of large, often secret, military installations.

"They've happened in force in Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Nebraska, Kansas, and Arkansas, for example," he said.

Montana contained several formidable Air Force bases, as well as hundreds of acres of underground ICBM silos. The mutilations there had clustered around those sites. Nebraska and Kansas were Strategic Air Command territory: Army and Air Force bases and more missile silos. New Mexico was practically a U.S. military province: Los Alamos Laboratories, home of the Manhattan Project that developed the first atom bomb; Sandia Laboratories; White Sands Missile Range. Arkansas was honeycombed with Titan missile silos. And Colorado was the military nerve center of the country: along with five major military bases, it held the U.S. Air Force Academy, Rocky Mountain Arsenal, and Cheyenne Mountain, the command post for NORAD, the North American Air Defense Command.

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*Seasoned cattle mutilation investigators used the word "mute" to describe the mutilated animals themselves and as an active verb.

Perkins was also working on a possible link between cattle mutilations and toxic chemical waste dumps. Again, the purpose here might be monitoring the pollutants picked up by mammals in the area without letting the public know anyone was even aware that such a problem existed.

He talked about geobotanical prospecting, a method used by mining companies to assay the mineral content of land without actually drilling for core samples. Certain plants are concentrators of minerals or compounds. If they are rooted in soil over ore deposits, they will absorb significant trace amounts of these substances and concentrate them in their tissues. Geobotanists take plant samples and analyze them for unduly high contents of the minerals they are looking for. If the indicator plants contain the right level of the ores, they know the odds of striking a deposit will be good. The drilling rigs are brought in for core sampling.

Perkins pointed out that animals will also concentrate specific elements in only certain tissues. Everybody knew about strontium concentrating in bone calcium, and iodine settling in the thyroid gland. A common cause of cattle loss is selenium poisoning. The element selenium occurs all over the range country. It is absorbed by grass and other plants eaten by cattle. Cows will often accumulate so much selenium in their tissues from eating tainted plants that they die. He was theorizing that perhaps the cattle were absorbing other elements from indicator plants on their grazing land.

Suppose, for instance, they were absorbing indicator elements for precious or strategic minerals like uranium or silver? The mutilators might be removing certain organs to analyze them for these mineral concentrations. Perhaps the mining conglomerates were doing this, he speculated, to log mineral-rich lands for future exploitation. Or perhaps it was the government, seeking to catalogue strategic resources. Maybe it was neither one, and someone was carrying out a long-term plan to locate these deposits for future manipulation.

He also considered the possibility that the mutilations were part of a secret military testing program for chemical and biological warfare weapons.

"There's an odd relationship between the jet stream and the mute waves," he said. Apparently, the jet stream tends to drift and curl north and south from season to season. Perkins said the mutilations seemed to move from state to state in the same way, a few times seeming to follow the path of the jet stream. There had been mutilations reported in Canada in 1979, when Perkins said the jet stream took a northward bend over the areas that had been affected. Perhaps, he offered, the government was still using the jet stream to carry bacterial or chemical poisons, and they were coming in on the sly to cut organs from animals in areas where the substances had been blown. The tissues would be analyzed for concentrations of the CBW (Chemical Biological Warfare) agents. This, too, could account for the mutilation of privately owned animals. They would have to take samples from any creatures in the path.

Perkins suggested other reasons for the mutilations. There were drugs known as chelating agents, he explained. If you took them, they would bond chemically with any dangerous heavy metals in your body, like plutonium or uranium, and keep them from being absorbed by the digestive tract, so they would pass out of the body as waste, leaving you unharmed.

The idea here was that the mutilations were part of a monitoring process to check and see that chelating agents surreptitiously placed in the food chain were doing their work.

It didn't seem to matter to Perkins where his ideas went. He could fly high on even the smallest dose of theory.

"There seems to be a definite correlation between UFOs and cattle mutilations," he said. He didn't offer any explanations for the origin of UFOs, but he saw some similar patterns between them and the mutes. There was a historical pattern of UFO sightings near nuclear facilities. This dovetailed with the similar design he had seen in the mutilations. He had trouble putting negative valuations on possible UFO involvement in the mutilations.

"If there is a connection, then I think it's essentially positive," he said. "It's a caring action. Who knows? Maybe they're looking at us, seeing how badly we're handling nuclear energy, and they're the ones putting the chelating agents into the food chain. Maybe they leave the carcasses around to let us know they're on the job. Say part of the game is that we have to do our half of the work, and figure out, from the mutilated animals, what they're doing and why."

Then again, he had no problem following Jacques Vallee's idea. Maybe the UFOs were from Earth, and they were doing all the same things—but for different reasons. Perkins felt uncomfortable with any formulations that placed the mutilations in the class of parapsychological phenomena.

He had heard about Ken Rommel and the L.E.A.A.-funded investigation in New Mexico. He felt Rommel might be out to debunk the entire mutilation issue. He had heard many rumors, and wasn't squeamish about repeating them.

"Someone told me that the government has mutes, lots of them, frozen in a secret lab in Texas. The lab director found something in these animals. It frightened him." It was far worse than anyone had imagined. The government, as a result, was working on highly sophisticated weapons to fight "them," the mutilators.

Who were "they"?

"I have no idea," Perkins said.

He promised to send us what he called his "kit": a compendium of information on the mutilations that he conveyed to all inquiring journalists.

He'd given us a good, broad view of the kind of reasoning that predominated among "mutologists," as they deprecatingly called themselves.

We had put out the word to everyone we knew that we were collecting information about cattle mutilations and now began receiving a steady stream of letters, newspaper clippings, and snippets of advice. A photographer named Don McCoy had taken some fine shots of mutilated animals in New Mexico and was trying to sell *Life* Magazine on the idea of a feature article. *Boulder Monthly,* a magazine out of Colorado, had published an issue almost exclusively devoted to cattle mutilations in January of 1979, including a long feature article by David Perkins, so the idea was not so outlandish.

In early March of 1980, we were telephoned by a young man named Peter Jordan. Jordan, who lived in New Jersey, described himself as a scientific investigator of unexplained phenomena. He did a lot of work with psychics. Jordan had been involved with the cattle mutilations for a few years. He was, like everyone else, collecting information and looking for an answer. He was tight with Gabe Valdez, he knew David Perkins slightly, and he was in regular touch with Tom Adams of Project Stigma. He was close to Howard Burgess in New Mexico, the retired instrumentation designer from Sandia Laboratories.

Apparently, Officer Gabe Valdez told Jordan we had been in touch. Jordan knew about the letters we had sent to Tom Adams, and Perkins had mentioned that he spoke with us. All these people, it seemed, were wondering who we were. We had no references, no prior history, none of them could locate anyone who knew us. This was obviously a well-tended grapevine. Since Jordan was geographically closest to us, just across the river in Union, New Jersey, he'd volunteered to check us out and test our legitimacy. We invited him to dinner.

As manifestly paranoid as he had sounded on the phone, Jordan was friendly in person. He seemed eager to talk, but hesitant. He wove a cloth of possible causes for the mutilations. Its warp and woof paralleled many of David Perkins's ideas: clandestine mineral prospecting via analysis of the tissues of mutilated animals; chelating agents; UFOs; government plots. The theories weren't anyone's property, he explained, they had been running around the grapevine for a while. Jordan himself made his living as a claims investigator for the Hertz car rental company: a perfect situation for an investigator of unexplained phenomena with a need for transcontinental communication.

Peter had spoken to Dr. Donald Peterson, a high administrator at Los Alamos Laboratories. Peterson had analyzed some tissue and bone samples of mutilated animals sent to him by Gabe Valdez in 1978, and the results showed nothing at all unusual. The animals had probably died from natural causes. Jordan felt, along with Valdez and Burgess, that Los Alamos was covering something up. He had written to Peterson, asking for an explanation. He gave us a copy of an angry response from the doctor, stating he was "shocked by your allegation that this laboratory has offered 'stubborn resistance' to an ongoing scientific investigation."

Jordan questioned us in a roundabout fashion. Our ignorance impressed him. He was satisfied that we were neither *agents provocateurs* from the government nor debunkers in disguise. In fact, he would share with us some fascinating results of his own research.

He was working with a psychic in New Jersey who had worked with the police in criminal cases. He had given her several of Don McCoy's photographs of mutes from the Gomez ranch in New Mexico. They were sealed in envelopes, and she held them in her hands and reported the images that entered her mind. She saw manned balloons being used in the mutilations. This would explain the UFO sightings and the silent lights reported in areas where the animals had been found. The balloons, she said, were rigged with sophisticated lighting effect systems to simulate the odd, colored luminescence and hue variations associated with UFO sightings. Whoever was doing this, she said, was using the UFO phenomenon to mislead investigators about the source of the cattle mutilations. He would send us the tapes he had made of those psychic sessions.

Jordan thought that we should speak with Howard Burgess in Albuquerque. He described Burgess as an "ex-top-secret instrumentation analyst from Los Alamos Laboratories." He warned us that Burgess was more than cautious: the man was afraid, and we would have to gain his confidence, as he was wary of uncovering some clandestine government operation and then being made to pay the price.

Jordan told us that he had been picking up a good deal of information about ex-FBI agent Ken Rommel's investigation in New Mexico under the L.E.A.A. grant. Howard Burgess kept in touch with Rommel, he said. He told us the word was that Rommel was planning to "defame the characters of the independent mute investigators in his report." According to Jordan, Rommel had implied to Burgess that he was going to ask lawmen like Gabe Valdez and other investigators to recant their claims of strangeness regarding the information. Otherwise, we were told, he was going to release information in his report to indicate that Burgess, Adams, Valdez, and the others had willfully defrauded the public about the nature of the mutilated animals and the mutilation phenomenon.

"There's a collision due," said Jordan, "between Rommel and the independent investigators." The general opinion among the investigators, he said, was that Rommel was not really investigating the New Mexico mutilations, but rather was simply trying to debunk the whole phenomenon and convince everyone it was really due to predators and mass hysteria generated by improper newspaper coverage. There were other voices that said Rommel really knew that there was something to the mutilations, a conspiracy of some sort, but that he had been ordered (after all, he was a former government agent) to cover up the real reason by blaming predators.

Peter Jordan had lately been expanding his inquiries. He had seen the recent article in *Newsweek* about the mutilations in Iowa and had contacted the Iowa Department of Criminal Investigation. He had spoken with the officer in charge of the case, Joe Motsinger. He gave us Motsinger's phone number.

We parted on excellent terms, and he assured us he would pronounce us trustworthy to the other members of the investigators' brotherhood.

A few days later, we telephoned agent Joe Motsinger of the Iowa State Department of Criminal Investigation, who was still reverberating with surprise: dozens of people from all over the country had called him since the *Newsweek* article.

Since October of 1979, there had been seven mutilated animals reported in Iowa. Three had been examined by a veterinarian, and they looked like the real thing. Motsinger said that the department was keeping an open mind about the possible causes, but that they had some hard leads that pointed toward local Satanic cults.

Motsinger had done a good deal of research; he had talked with law enforcement people in several states that had had waves of cattle mutilations. Some Missouri state troopers had seen some mutilated animals in 1975, and they thought the same cult that Motsinger was chasing might have been responsible. He had spoken with a senior investigator named Steve Watts, from the State Bureau of Criminal Investigation in Idaho. Idaho had had a series of cattle mutilations in 1975 and 1976, and Watts and several other investigators had infiltrated a Satanic cult they were sure was responsible.

Motsinger had consulted with Captain Keith Wolverton of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office in Great Falls, Montana. Montana had experienced a large wave of cattle mutilations in 1975, and reactions to it had reached proportions as large as those in Colorado in the same year. Several counties were involved, and Air Force authorities at Malmstrom Air Base in Great Falls had been committed to the investigation. Along with another writer, Wolverton had produced a book about the experience, entitled *Mystery Stalks the Prairie*.

The Montana mutilation wave had been accompanied by the full range of phenomena: UFO sightings, cult sites, even sightings of Bigfoot, and Wolverton and his men had put months into an intensive investigation. Somewhere along the line, they had been advised about a drug called Ketamine, which someone had suggested that perhaps the cattle mutilators used on the animals they killed. Ketamine is an anaesthetic, widely used on both animals and humans, which immobilizes its subject without inducing skeletal muscle relaxation. Quickly metabolized and excreted in the urine, it leaves little trace. An overdose can kill. A toxicologist in Montana had theorized that if someone were tranquilizing cattle in order to drain their blood and mutilate them, Ketamine would be the ideal drug, since it could knock an animal down while increasing its heart rate and blood pressure: it would therefore make it easier to bleed the animal dry while it was immobile. After the animal died from exsanguination its organs would be removed, leaving little or no blood around the wounds. The Teton County, Montana, Sheriff's Office had gone so far as to test the drug's effectiveness on a crippled calf.

Motsinger suggested we keep in touch periodically. Things were quiet then in Iowa. There had been no helicopter or UFO sightings, but there was some flurry of public panic as a result of newspaper coverage of the reported mutilations, helped along by the *Newsweek* article. Farmers were starting to report as mutilations dead animals obviously the victims of predators or disease.

We had put off contacting Howard Burgess because of Peter Jordan's warning about the man's paranoia, but since Burgess was the only investigator with any science background we felt the delay was costing us useful information. We called Burgess in Albuquerque, and at first he was hesitant to discuss the subject, yet extremely direct with his opinions about it.

"I'm positive that something's going on with these things. Whatever's doing it has a lot of skill. It's not predators. There's something big and organized behind it. I don't want to get in anyone's road," he said. "If there's some powerful group doing this, I don't want to be the one to blow the lid off."

Though he never specifically stated what he was afraid of, he implied that whoever got too close to a solution to the cattle mutilations was risking a great deal, possibly his life.

Burgess said he had seen and recorded evidence of UFOs at mutilation sites, but he declined to say what he thought that might mean.

"I'm the only one with a science background to get involved with this thing. I wish I had never gotten into it," he said. It was obvious that the only way to gain Burgess's confidence would be to pay him a personal visit in New Mexico.

The next day, we finally telephoned Tom Adams at Project Stigma in Paris, Texas. He knew who we were immediately. Yes, he said, Jordan told him we were sincere and presented no danger.

Adams had been studying the cattle mutilations since 1970, publishing *Stigmata* on a quarterly basis when he could afford to. He was a cornucopia of information; he could deliver names, places, and dates, apparently without referring to his files; he had it all in his head.

He directed us to Lou Girodo, an investigator for the District Attorney's Office in Trinidad, Colorado, who had worked closely with him. We should, he recommended, contact Bill Jackson, a reporter for the *Greeley Daily Tribune* in Colorado. Jackson had covered the Colorado mute wave of 1975, and had heard rumors of ranchers coming upon mutilations in progress. There might be witnesses. In the same area was Harry "Tex" Graves, the former sheriff of Logan County, Colorado. Graves had been in office in 1975, when Logan had been inundated with UFO sightings and mutilations. Graves himself had seen the UFO, a protean light in the sky, many times. He had files and photos.

According to Adams, Graves had supposedly been so shaken by his experiences that year that he had left the office of sheriff at the end of his term and retired to open a vacuum cleaner business. Adams had heard that Graves's successor as sheriff had burned many of the files and photos he had left behind. Adams had also heard that at various times pressure from unknown sources had been applied to people, possibly Graves, to drop their investigations.

Adams had contacts all over the country because of Project Stigma. People sent him news clippings every time there was a mutilation anywhere in the United States. Although he had his finger on the pulse of the mutilation phenomenon, he flatly refused to discuss any theories about the cause of the mutilations.

"I don't make hypotheses," he said. "It gets in the way of objectivity. I collect any information I can find, and pass it along."

Adams promised to help us in any way he could. Since we were serious researchers, he would supply us with *Stigmata* gratis. Copies would be in the mail to us the next day.

These initial interviews had left us with the distinct impression that we were latecomers. A national interest in the mutilations had been building for ten years, and a subculture had been fully established since around 1974, when the reports in Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota had made the national media via *Newsweek*. We needed to run fast to catch up. The cattle mutilation phenomenon, and the sheer number of people involved in following it, theorizing about it, and expending concerned energy over it, was far greater than we had imagined.

Packages arrived from David Perkins and Tom Adams. Perkins's package was dense and heavy. Inside was a ring binder containing a full summary of his work to date.

An article for the spring issue of *Taos*, a regional publication in New Mexico, was most revealing—a bitter piece of writing constructed around the L.E.A.A.-funded investigation being conducted by ex-FBI man Ken Rommel in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In a pronouncedly sarcastic tone, Perkins announced that we could "all sleep soundly tonight knowing that the mutilated cows were not mutilated at all." Referring to the investigator as Ken "The Fox" Rommel, Perkins called his findings "total unadulterated bullshit." The report would not be made public until June or July, but Perkins had interviewed Rommel and been generally told by the investigator that he had concluded, after examining twenty-nine reported mutilations, that all the animals had died of natural causes and been torn up by predators.

Perkins wrote that Rommel had told him he came to this conclusion even before he had fully examined the cases reported to him. There was an odor of prejudice here, bias, an investigator making up his mind before experiencing the evidence, then looking for support to his hypothesis rather than examining the evidence with an open mind.

This explained the frustration and suspicion about the Rommel investigation expressed by the cattle mutilation investigators we had interviewed. Rommel was the ultimate debunker: armed with the clout and authority of a Federal grant, he wanted to discredit the idea of cattle mutilations once and for all, to close the field to inquiry, to make ranchers feel foolish for reporting mutilated animals. Rommel was the enemy, made further heinous by his former connection to the FBI.

Tom Adams had sent us issues of *Stigmata*, along with a few newspaper stories about him and Project Stigma. Xeroxed instead of printed, bound with staples, *Stigmata* was as neat and professional as its format permitted. On the masthead of each issue was a declaration:

"Project Stigma represents an ongoing probe into the relentless wave of animal mutilations and mutilation deaths, and is an attempt to coordinate and assist in information-gathering activities on the part of pertinent and responsible investigative agencies and individuals."

Stigmata was a chink in the log wall of media image positioning practiced by Adams, Perkins, and the other cattle mutilation investigators. Its very existence had obviously affected public perception of the mutilations. As of 1978, people who had something to say about the mutilations had someone to write to who would publish their comments. *Stigmata* number two informed readers that Adams would supply them with a standardized animal mutilation report form to "consolidate data and to support law enforcement reports and the like." An article by a member of APRO (Aerial Phenomena Research Organization) was reviewed. The writer had argued vehemently against any link between cattle mutilations and UFOs. Adams took him to task, concluding that just because the link could not be proven didn't mean it had no validity.

Adams wrote a good deal about objectivity and the importance of data over opinions. After the mention of a paper written by a South Dakota sociologist entitled "Cattle Mutilations: An Episode of Collective Delusion," Adams supplied the man's address and suggested that interested readers send for a copy. Immediately following it was this statement: "It should be noted that the pages of *Stigmata* will not be enthusiastically open to debate on the question of whether or not there actually *are* any 'classic' mutilations occurring. Our primary thrust will be toward determining who (or what), how and why."

Obviously, Adams was not willing to stretch his objectivity far enough to include the possibility that the mutilations might ultimately turn out to be nothing more than error, collective delusion, predator damage, and press distortion.

Lists were given in each issue of reported mutilations, catalogued by state and county. In some cases, the details of the stories surrounding the reports were summarized at length from newspaper coverage and witness accounts. Any and all suppositions and theories about the causes of cattle mutilations were printed. Adams refused to discriminate against even the most marginal or farfetched hypotheses.

We turned to the next step in our own work.

4

Taking Stock

We decided to stitch together a general model of the cattle mutilation phenomenon from all the information we had gathered so far. The seams of the model had to be tight, because our next step would be to take it out into the field and subject it to some rigorous tests to see how it held up.

It shaped up like this:

Between 1973 and 1980, between 8,000 and 12,000 cattle and horses had apparently been killed and surgically mutilated. This had happened in between twenty-one and forty states.

The condition of the animals fit a broad pattern. The parts removed usually included the sexual organs, rectum, anus, udder, tongue, and sometimes ears and eyes. The removal of the sexual organs, anus, udder, and tongue was referred to as a "classic mutilation." In some cases, patches of hide were removed as well, in seemingly perfect circles or ovals. Often there was no blood around the wounds, and in some cases the carcasses seemed to have been intentionally drained of blood.

The mutilations frequently rolled in a wave across a whole state or a group of counties in a state. These waves often coincided with the sightings of UFOs, odd lights in the sky, unmarked helicopters, night-flying helicopters with powerful searchlights, and silent helicopters.

Mutilated animals had been reported with broken legs, broken backs, and horns driven into the ground, as if they had been lifted into the air and dropped.

Cattle mutilations generally occurred between April and October, and usually stopped with the onset of winter.

Mutilations were often accompanied by seemingly freakish events. Dogs known to bark wildly at any disturbance within a quarter-mile of a ranch house would remain silent on the night before an animal was found mutilated very close to the house. Bold dogs would inexplicably cower in fear at the same time a mutilation was concluded to have taken place nearby.

Predators and scavengers were reported to avoid the carcasses of mutilated animals.

The carcasses of these cattle were reported either to decay abnormally quickly or to remain fresh and undecayed for unnaturally long periods of time.

The mutilated carcasses sometimes showed what looked like strange burns, and their internal organs were reported to turn abnormal colors, such as pale yellow, and take on textures described as "mushy" and "like peanut butter."

Either no tracks or signs were found around mutilated carcasses, or strange marks were found near them. These had been reported as round indentations arranged in the shape of a triangle, and as long parallel depressions like the skid marks from a helicopter.

People who had been close to the carcasses or handled them sometimes reported symptoms of illness: tenacious colds, week-long headaches, skin irritations.

Pathology laboratories that had examined the carcasses could not find anything but natural causes of death.

Cattle mutilations seemed to take place in areas containing military bases, deposits of precious or strategic ores, petroleum deposits, uranium mines, nuclear weapons, and ballistic missile silos.

Not one law enforcement agency seemed to have come up with a satisfactory solution to the reported mutilations, despite many dollars and man-hours spent investigating them. State and Federal agencies seemed uncooperative or stubborn about participating in investigations of mutilated cattle.

Evidence of the activity of ritualistic blood cults had been found in several of the states that had had waves of cattle mutilations. Some of the evidence pointed toward the use of the parts taken from mutilated cattle in cult rituals.

We still were not clear about the ultimate objective of our work. And we also had to deal with the question of our point of view about the phenomenon as we delved into it.

Standing in opposition were the debunkers, who said the whole thing was misperceived predator and scavenger damage coupled with mass hysteria. If you accepted their arguments, though, then you had to accept a gargantuan gullibility and irrationality on the part of not only a large segment of the public, but also of the press, in about half the states of the Union.

It seemed that the only way to discover the truth was for us to enter into the cattle mutilation phenomenon through the door of the believers—the independent cattle mutilation investigators, the amateur scientists without portfolio, the conspiracy theorists. Their ideas offered the only model to be tested. We didn't have to become them, we reasoned, we only had to learn to think like them.

If they turned out to be completely wrong, then there would be a lesson for us about the vigor of irrationality and self-deception. But if they were right, or even partly right, then what new depths could be added to our comprehension of ourselves and our society?

Brain Food: We Catch The Disease

> *"None of us can go a little way with a theory;*
> *when it once possesses us, we are no longer*
> *our own masters. It makes us speak its words,*
> *and do violence to our natures."*
> *John Henry Cardinal Newman*

The fundamental attraction of the cattle mutilation phenomenon was that it squatted out there over the beef-raising states, an object of contemplation, controversy, and, for many, fear. It was an enigma, and no one had yet served up a satisfactory reading of it. The only way to be involved in studying it was to desire to solve it once and for all, one way or another. To this end, we devised a method of research in four sections.

First, we would collect all the information we could over the phone and through the mail.

We would then take a short research trip to New Mexico and Colorado, since these were the states which seemed to offer the greatest available funds of original data from first sources: police files, laboratory reports, witness accounts.

Our third step would be to take an extended research trip across the country and interview key players in the cattle mutilations: sheriffs, veterinarians, reporters, network members.

Along the way we would pass through the country where the mutilations had taken place and try to enter its atmosphere, to

understand what effect the land itself, the weather and terrain, might play in the cattle mutilations.

The last step would be to sift through all our data to try and make conclusions and eliminate theories that couldn't stand up to close scrutiny. We would consult the best veterinary pathologist we could find, and learn from him whether or not the claims made about the condition of mutilated animals were as bizarre as they sounded. We would consult experts on chemical and biological warfare for their opinions about the possible role of these in the mutilations. Then we would concentrate our attention on the theories best supported by evidence we had gathered and, by a process of elimination, arrive at the most likely cause for cattle mutilations. Then we would plug our findings into any current police investigations, and, with luck, help the authorities make the first arrest of a cattle mutilator.

It was a brave manifesto: David Perkins and Tom Adams had been trying to do exactly the same thing for five and ten years respectively.

At first we would reject no postulated explanations for the cattle mutilations, no matter how at variance they were with our beliefs. Each would be posited as equal to all the others. This meant that Fred Smith's ideas about the mutilations being cryptic messages from the spirit realm were no more or less viable than the predator theory or the notions about secret government testing programs. They all went into the hopper, noted, defined, and described.

We were using a system that we called the Vacuum Cleaner Method. The object was to suck in everything you could find about your subject, rejecting nothing as absurd. Later you could evaluate the data and toss out what didn't prove up.

Operating in syncopation with the Vacuum Cleaner Method, we used the Pendulum Technique, which requires that you maintain an even, rhythmic swing between two opposite poles of attitude. One pole holds the mordant charge of full skepticism. It is characterized by the question "How do we know that any of this stuff ever happened?" The energy from this pole forces you always to look closely at information before allowing it near the nozzle of the Vacuum Cleaner. This does not go against the Vacuum Cleaner principle, but simply keeps that machine from becoming overloaded.

The opposite end of the pendulum's arc was marked by the mania of unbridled infatuation. There, everything and anything was possible. Why couldn't the cattle mutilations be spirit messages from beyond the grave? Could anyone prove conclusively that the spirit realm did not exist? Perhaps the mutilations were some kind of manifestation of the bad karma we had piled up in the years since the Industrial Revolution.

5

Colorado 1975: Anatomy Of A Mute Wave

While we were infatuated with all the endless possibilities of causes for the cattle mutilations, we were also aware that we had better have a firm grip on the ins and outs of the mechanics of a cattle mutilation wave before we left on our first trip into the field in a few weeks.

From the news clippings and articles we had read, and from the people we had interviewed, we now had a general picture of the sequence in which a mute wave develops in a given region. So we decided to reconstruct an actual mute wave from information in our files and study it in detail.

We chose to rebuild the Colorado wave of 1975 for several reasons. First, the Colorado wave was the largest, most intense, and most completely publicized appearance to date of the cattle mutilations and their concurrent phenomena. It contained all the elements of the issue, from nuclear and military facilities to UFO sightings; vicious antagonism between county law enforcement agencies and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, including public accusations of a cover-up by the CBI; widespread public confusion and fear; intimations of government plots; saturated press coverage; and the participation of a veterinary diagnostic laboratory.

Second, Colorado was a significant event in the history of the cattle mutilation phenomenon. And third, Colorado is a perfect model for every other mute wave that has ever been observed. The same basic sequence of events that occurred there has been repeated, with minor variation, in every state that has experienced a cattle mutilation before or since.

One fact of ranch and farm existence is that cattle die all the time; in fact, they die regularly, expectedly, and in rather large numbers. Ranchers and farmers are well aware of this, and they are used to seeing dead cattle. The animals routinely die in the course of an average year from a variety of causes: disease, accident, genetic unfitness, malnutrition, dehydration, parasites, and, in mountain states like Colorado, cold weather.

The College of Veterinary Medicine at Colorado State University had found out over the years that, at the minimum, between one and one-and-one-half percent of all the cattle in Colorado will die during a given year. We discovered that this number begins to take on some heft when it's plugged into the actual cattle population.

In 1979, USDA figures listed 3,090,000 cattle and calves in Colorado. If only one percent of those died as expected, there were *at least* 30,900 dead cattle littering the pastures, corrals, and meadows of Colorado that year. Actually, USDA figures state that 145,000 cows and calves died in Colorado in 1979; more than four-and-a-half percent of the total cattle population.

Even if 1979 was an especially bad year, it is probably safe to assume, without the risk of artificially inflating the total, that *at least* one percent of cattle will die in a given year, probably more. The USDA figure for the total population of cattle and calves in the United States in 1979 was 110,864,000, or roughly one animal for every two U.S. citizens. If one percent of those animals died as expected (remember, this is an intentional underestimation for the sake of prudence), then there were *at least* 1,108,640 deceased cattle nationwide in *just one year*!

Actually, there were considerably more: 5,600,000. And there was nothing bizarre or mysterious about this: 5.6 million dead cows are all in a year's work for the U.S. cattle industry. Ranchers, farmers, and the county sheriffs and deputies in beef country know this. They may not know the exact figures, but they are quite used to a fairly large number of dead cattle every year.

Nineteen seventy-nine was not the year of greatest abundance for the U.S. cattle industry. That year was 1975, when the USDA listed the total U.S. population of cattle and calves at 132,028,000. Again, this figure means that *at least* 1.3 million of these animals died that year nationwide, expectedly, and with no fanfare. The same year there were about 4.4. million cattle in

Colorado. The minimum one-percent loss would have been 44,000 head. In fact, 180,000 died, or about four percent.

Yet, with more than 180,000 dead cattle strewn around Colorado in 1975, only 203 reports by ranchers to police about cattle that looked as though they might have been cut up in some strange way resulted in a statewide uproar that ultimately involved a special intercession by Governor Richard Lamm and an investigation by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation that has been acknowledged to be the largest in the history of the state. What happened?

What happened was that in May and June of 1975 a few ranchers in El Paso and Elbert Counties found some of their animals dead and missing some parts. Although the exact damage varied from case to case, the missing parts were some combination of udder and vulva if the animal was a cow, or scrotum and testes if it was a bull, along with the anus, tongue, and possibly an ear or eye. In none of the cases had the meat been butchered out. If it had, the ranchers would probably have assumed that they had been the victims of beef rustlers, common criminals out West who will shoot a cow and steal the meat for food.

Still, the missing parts should not have posed a great problem. The wide spaces of the western states still support dense populations of wild predators and scavengers: coyotes, wolves, eagles, buzzards, weasels, badgers, ravens, magpies, and many other meat-eaters. Like most true predators, they'd rather not work for their food if they can avoid it, and they'll feed on any dead animal they can find if it's not too far gone into decomposition.

Ranchers also know that predators and scavengers will usually start consuming a dead cow at the points on the carcass where the going is easiest. Because a cow has a tough hide, the tender points are the areas where the skin is thinnest, the hair sparse, and where soft mucous membranes meet the air. These zones are the udder, the scrotum, the anus, the vulva, the tongue, mouth, and the eye. So these first few ranchers should not have felt they were in the presence of anything ominous when they found their animals dead and minus these particular parts. They were looking at something they had probably seen before.

Perhaps this is why they were struck by an odd detail in the condition of the carcasses. To them, the nature of the wounds seemed unusual. The edges looked clean, as though they had been made by a knife or other sharp instrument. Maybe an udder

was missing, and the layer of muscle beneath it, or the peritoneal membrane beneath the muscle, was intact. Predators will usually keep going once they taste blood, and they would normally chew right through the tissue under the udder and into the abdominal cavity. Maybe the tongue was gone, but the flesh and hide from the animal's lower jaw was also stripped in such a way that it looked as though someone had carefully dissected off the flesh, leaving straight edges. Whatever the specifics of their impressions, the ranchers felt that someone had cut these cows and carried off the parts they had removed. The next logical thought that probably occurred to them was that the person who sliced the animal up might also have killed it first to accomplish his purpose.

When a rancher looks at a cow, he sees the six to eight hundred dollars in cash money that an animal will bring when it's sold for slaughter. Or he sees a breeding cow that will produce more cattle for him to raise and sell in future seasons. When he looks at a bull, he sees future calves that will grow into marketable meat animals. A rancher's cattle represent his mortgage payments, a new tractor, grocery money, medical expenses, feed bills, and his kids' college tuition. When he looks at a dead cow, he's looking at a substantial piece of money that's just been shot right to hell.

Those first few ranchers in Colorado in 1975 found themselves in a bad position, one which likely sparked feelings of anger, but also of fear and confusion, since they were standing over what seemed to be the aftermath of a seemingly motiveless crime which had speared them in their bank accounts.

The local sheriffs or their deputies came to see the carcasses and agreed that it certainly looked like someone had cut off those parts with a knife. Strange. Here we have a mutilated cow. No motive. Not butchered, not eaten by wild things. Mutilated.

There still seemed to have been no reason for these first few incidents to have blossomed into a statewide alarm. We assumed that the sheriffs asked the usual questions. Were there any grudges here? Would anyone want to do this to strike back at the rancher for any reason? When was the animal last seen alive? Did you see any strangers or strange cars or trucks around at that time? How did the animal die? Was it cut up before or after death?

If the first few cases were relatively close together, as these were, and in Colorado this can mean within fifty miles of one another, did it look like there was some connection between them? If the animal looked to have an abnormally low amount of clotted blood in its carcass, how important was this? Was it dead long enough so that normal decomposition could account for it?

Logically, one of three outcomes should have followed the first few cases of reported cattle mutilation in Colorado:

1) The police might have solved the case, found the people who mutilated the animals, and arrested them.
2) Subsequent investigation might have shown that the ranchers and sheriffs were mistaken. Although the wounds on the animal definitely looked like the result of some fairly sophisticated knife work, they might have turned out to be the work of predators and scavengers. It's a fact that wound edges may shrink to smooth contours after they've been torn. Everyone might have shaken his head and gone home.
3) The cases might have remained unsolved, to become a local mystery of powerful speculation but no great harm. After all, individual animals were involved, not herds.

The ranchers might have either received insurance coverage for the animals or not, shaken off the loss, and added a few anecdotes to a new local legend. But events, whether they are cattle mutilations or town meetings, do not take place in a vacuum. And seemingly bizarre events tend to prick people's curiosity, lead to discussions and speculations. Cattlemen, like the members of any other profession, tend to talk shop with each other. News of something so strange as mutilated cattle would spread quickly among them, and it would be accelerated in both its passage and its growth by a factor that is unique to only a few occupations.

Ranchers live in a world of threats to their existence from bad weather, disease, and drought. Many of these dangers are the work of unstoppable and often unpredictable forces of nature. Others, like the government's constant involvement in the industry, are man-made and merely troublesome and expensive. Because of this, a successful rancher is often the man who constantly has his eyes and ears open to potential dangers to his animals and his income. The 1975 Colorado mutilations probably drew more than a passing interest not because they involved large numbers of animals, but because they looked like a new source of stock losses, another thing to worry about.

Their interest was also likely due to a paradox of the rancher's existence: independent and self-sufficient as grizzly bears, nevertheless, they tend to see themselves as a group since any of the major misfortunes of range life can strike any one family at any time. It was natural, then, for the ranchers in Colorado to respond with a kind of focused group concern to a threat that looked capable of striking any one of them at any time.

At the same time the ranchers were talking to each other about mutilated cattle, the police and sheriffs' departments were also talking among themselves and with other local law enforcement agencies, comparing notes and looking for a solution to the mystery. The initial dozen or so dead cows were pulling a great deal of attention.

The agricultural and local small-town newspapers had carried short articles about the reported mutilations. Cops talk to reporters, and reporters are always checking in at the sheriff's office to root out a story. The pot was simmering, and during June of 1975 it began to turn into a roiling cauldron.

The larger newspapers in Colorado began to carry articles about the mutilations, because responses to them had begun to assume a solid shape. The Elbert County Livestock Association, in answer to the rumbling concern of its members, had posted a $1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone stealing, mutilating, or illegally killing cattle. We noted here that mutilation was only one of three crimes mentioned: the other two were rustling and wanton destruction, no news to ranchers. Yet the newspapers seemed only to see the word mutilation, probably because the Livestock Association had endorsed the seriousness of the mutilation problem by offering the reward, and the action was seen by many as a muscular answer to some major threat.

In fact, Elbert County had lost less than a dozen animals to reported mutilation in a period of about four weeks, and nobody ever bothered to check whether this indicated a significant rise in the overall normal cattle loss for that period. This reward, the first posted in that state, coupled with the sheriff's department inability to make any headway in the case, looked like some hot copy.

The *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, located in Colorado Springs in El Paso County, on the southern border of Elbert, and one of the two large dailies in the area, had assigned a reporter named Dorothy Aldridge to cover the events. Judging from the file of clips she sent us, Aldridge seemed to specialize in feature stories about off-beat topics—in the summer of 1980 she was writing a series of articles about a psychic who was trying to locate a missing Colorado man. On June 13, 1975, the *Gazette-Telegraph* published a long feature piece by Aldridge about the reward, with a summary of the mutilation problem to date.

Eight columns wide, the headline was printed in bold, half-inch type: "Are Satan's Phantom Killers Mutilating Cattle?" The piece was built around some research Aldridge had done at the Penrose Public Library on symbolic and ritual mutilation of animals by pagan religious practitioners and fertility cults, linked to some reported sightings of unidentified helicopters in areas where the reported mutilations took place. The Livestock Association's reward was first mentioned only in the fourth paragraph, as an example of real-life support to three lead paragraphs of speculation about Satanists, bloodless carcasses, and helicopters.

First, the article described the principles of sympathetic magic used by "medicinal murderers" in Africa who, Aldridge stated, remove organs from an animal they've killed in order to take power for themselves. "If one wants sexual prowess, one removes the sex organs . . . if he wants keener eyesight or a sharper mind, he removes the eyeball or the brain." This follows what was apparently the favorite theory of Colorado lawmen at that time; that the mutilations were the work of some kind of "Satanic" cult or black witchcraft group. This hypothesis was not baseless, but it was also not that well supported. The story went on to describe how several ranchers felt that there had been an unusual number of helicopters in the area during the preceding month, and that these might be connected to the mutilations. In fact, the story implies that the cult used these "mystery" helicopters to capture the animals.

Several times, Aldridge used the terms "surgical removal" and "expert surgery" when describing the condition of animals. In fact, she quoted a rancher as having ascertained the surgical removal of his animal's organs. It's crucial that she seems not to have had the slightest doubt that the man could diagnose complex surgical work, a job usually reserved for highly trained pathologists. Even assuming that his animal actually was cut, Aldridge did not question what the rancher meant by the word "surgical."

A few paragraphs on, she referred to the cow as "mysteriously slain," and then delivered a veterinarian's verdict: "a high-class surgical job requiring skill and technique beyond the capabilities of any known person in the area, professional or not." His conclusions were partially based on his judgment that the cow had been bled dry while alive and cut apart at this point, because there was no blood around the wounds and none on the ground. Unfortunately, the reporter never bothered to find out how long the animal had been dead before it was reported, a pointed consideration regarding whether or not the lack of blood was unusual. Aldridge also did not weigh the credibility of the doctor. He was a clinical veterinarian trained to treat living animals, not a pathologist trained to make subtle diagnostic determinations on dead ones. How accurate was his conclusion? The story slid by this query. How great was his knowledge of pathology? No questions asked.

The point was that she, and consequently her article, was focused more closely on what was said *about* the animal, the reaction to it, than on the mutilation itself—the blood-and-guts facts that might tend to shed some real light on what had happened.

Aldridge twice quoted sheriff's men as they referred to similar events in other states. "It began in Wisconsin and has been working itself this way through Nebraska and Kansas," said one. "They've mutilated cattle in Texas, Kansas, and now Colorado, and none of them have been caught," said another.

There were two things happening with the appearance of this information. First, the local reports were being further endorsed, and their importance, despite their relatively small number, was being placed in a larger and more sinister class. Second, and far more crucial, information from outside Colorado about the mutilations was beginning to exert an influence on how the police, ranchers, and citizens in that state reacted to their own mutilation reports.

This is not to say that the *Gazette-Telegraph* or Dorothy Aldridge single-handedly started a mass panic that led to statewide hallucinations by ranchers and lawmen, but it is to say that coverage like this caused a fundamental change in the perspective of Colorado ranchers: they began *looking* for mutilated animals, expecting a siege like the ones they had heard about. So did the lawmen.

By July 10, 1975, forty mutilations had been reported in eastern Colorado. In the majority of news stories the determination is described as being made on the site by the rancher or a deputy without even the doubtful benefit of a veterinarian untrained in diagnostic pathology. It was impossible to tell which ones were authentic.

The reports also became stranger and stranger. The apparent lack of blood around the wounds was emphasized in the press, as were assertions that the animals had died with no signs of struggle. Subtle phrasing in many newspaper stories slanted perceptions. Even in cases where mutilation was being hotly contested by those who had actually seen the carcass, some insisting that it was a natural death from, say, lightning followed by predator damage, the press was using locutions like "one side of his [the bull's] face and a nostril had been skinned out." "Skinned out" is a hunter's term meaning that someone had intentionally removed the flesh with a knife, as in field-dressing a deer. The term implies human action. Yet the truth was that the flesh was merely gone, and eyewitnesses were bickering loudly about whether it was chewed out by a coyote or sliced out by a two-legged cattle mutilator.

In July, the American Humane Society put up a $500 reward for the conviction of the culprits and released the information to the Associated Press, insuring national coverage of the story. Their spokesman indicated that the society was merely posting the same reward in Colorado that it had offered in the Minnesota cattle mutilation cases the previous year. Here were events from halfway across the country underlining the importance of the mutilations in Colorado.

Sheriffs from several counties began comparing notes on mutilation reports in their districts. Reports continued to mount. By August 3, 1975, a total of sixty mutilated animals had been reported in seven counties. Sixty reports, in a state where the USDA records over four million cattle on the hoof at that time. Approximately *one one-thousandth of one percent* of the total cattle population were the eye of this gathering storm.

On August 3, 1975, the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, the state criminal agency that provides support for local police departments in the form of political clout, funds, laboratory facilities, and highly trained field investigators, announced that it was entering the cattle mutilation investigation at the request of the county sheriffs.

Meanwhile, the Colorado State Grange had posted another $500 reward. Several more "mystery helicopter" sightings had been logged. And on August 3 another factor was injected into the burgeoning phenomenon.

The *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*'s Dorothy Aldridge wrote another feature about the mutilations. Four columns wide this time, the story's headline was set in large, half-inch type like that of her prior article. It read: "UFO Pilots Not the Cause of Cattle Mutilations." The curious thing to us was that there had been no flurry of UFO sightings in Colorado during this period, so why would the story be framed as if in rebuttal to some claim that UFOs had been involved?

The article was made up essentially of quotes from several issues of the *APRO Bulletin*, a publication put out by the Aerial Phenomenon Research Organization, located in Tucson, Arizona, along with a few statements from the group's field investigators who had spoken to Aldridge.

Apparently, APRO, a self-ordained UFO research group which claims it is scientific in character, had heard about the mutilation reports in Colorado and had decided to offer its assistance to the law enforcement authorities there in cracking the case. APRO was seeking to do this by making their intentions and information known to Dorothy Aldridge. This made sense, we thought, since it was clear from other articles she had written that Aldridge was well connected with the large national UFO subculture. In fact, she later wrote two articles about the mutilations for *Official UFO* Magazine in 1977. They appeared in issues along with articles entitled "I was 80 And A UFO Made Me 18," "How UFOs Cause Cancer," and "Are Russian Killer Satellites Destroying Friendly Space Visitors?"

According to Aldridge's article, APRO had conducted an extensive study of the cattle mutilations because the previously reported cases in South Dakota, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Texas had been accompanied by UFO sightings. APRO, we knew, says it has determined for a fact that aliens from other planets visit earth, and in 1975 the group apparently felt that it was unfair to saddle them with the blame for destroying dumb animals in a cruel fashion.

APRO claimed to have launched an exhaustive field investigation into the cattle mutilations. The group concluded that most of the reported mutilations had resulted from the "usual causes, diseases and malnutrition," and that "the missing parts were those usually attacked by small scavenging animals."

The piece then went on to recount APRO's story about how it had discovered that the small percentage of authentic mutilations were the result of a huge, nationwide, fantastically rich Satanic cult bent on bringing about a "1,000-year reign of terror and darkness." Aldridge's APRO quotes go on to describe how the group had discovered connections to this cult in all the states that had experienced cattle mutilations. They even described to her how the cultists approached the intended animal by crawling along the ground on large pieces of pasteboard to avoid leaving footprints. They would then, according to APRO, dart the animal with a tranquilizer gun, inject a heart stimulant to facilitate blood flow, open a throat artery, and collect the animal's blood. The organs were then removed to be used in Satanic rites, leaving no blood behind in the wounds or the animal. The group's assertions went on at length about cult members who had been arrested for other crimes, and about how the cult purposely "set up evidence to make it look as though UFOs had done the job of mutilation, its goal to unhinge the social order sufficiently to cause world crisis."

It was clear from the tone of Aldridge's writing that she placed great value on APRO's statements.

Actually, APRO's story about an interstate cult group performing cattle mutilations was loosely based in fact. The story came from something called the Flickinger Report, which was the result of an investigation into the mutilations conducted in 1974 by Don Flickinger, an agent for the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Flickinger had been approached by two prison inmates who claimed to have information on the cattle deaths. They wove a baroque tale of occultists, drugs, ritual murder, motorcycle gangs, and cattle mutilations. Since some of their facts seemed plausible, Flickinger followed the story, linking up with police in the states named by his informants, as well as with authorities in areas where there had been reports of cattle mutilations. Ultimately, the story began to crack apart at its weak points, and authorities could not verify any of the claims made by two convicts. What looked like a possible solution was abandoned after many months of work. Unfortunately, APRO had given Aldridge a version of the events surrounding the Flickinger Report that was utterly distorted and inaccurate to the point of uselessness. Apparently, Aldridge never checked for the real facts with the Oklahoma State Police or the Minnesota office of the ATF.

Of course, the point here was not the credibility of Aldridge's research or the accuracy of APRO's assertions, but rather the mood in eastern Colorado at the time this article was written. It showed up in the *Gazette-Telegraph* because by that time everyone, including sheriffs, deputies, ranchers, and other civilians, was completely mystified by the mutilation reports. There was open talk and speculation about UFOs and blood cults. Aldridge's articles simply delved in detail into what was on the lips of the population of eastern Colorado at that time.

Two weeks later, in mid-August, Aldridge wrote another long article, this time headlined "Evidence Presented for UFO Intrusions." In it she presented the arguments of a representative of a local UFO organization which had concluded that the cattle mutilations were without a doubt the work of extraterrestrials. They used, he said, a kind of electron particle force beam to lift cattle into their crafts, where the organs were removed surgically for some purpose. As far as we could determine, there still had been no UFO sightings in Colorado at that time, so it was difficult to understand why the *Gazette-Telegraph* would run long stories about the subject in conjunction with the mutilations.

This was important because there is a deep link between the UFO subculture in this country and the cattle mutilation phenomenon, and this coupling has added a crippling amount of complexity to the whole affair.

The hook-and-eye between UFO groups and cattle mutilations stems from the Snippy the horse incident that took place in Alamosa, Colorado. On September 9, 1967, during a period when there was a cross-country "flap" of dozens of UFO sightings in the United States, Snippy, a three-year-old Appaloosa gelding, was found dead in a pasture, with all the flesh above his shoulders stripped from his carcass. He had been missing for two days, surely long enough for local predators to have cleaned his bones, but the horse's owners, Beryl and Nellie Lewis, thought differently after examining Snippy's remains.

They felt that the edges of the carcass's flesh where the stripped bones began was entirely too smooth and even to be the result of tooth work by animals. They also encountered what they described as a "sickening sweet odor," a "medicinal smell" around the dead horse. They claimed to have found none of the standard clues to a natural death: scorch marks from lightning, visible signs of illness, or evidence of attack by large meat-eaters like mountain lions.

Over the next few days, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis searched the area where the horse was found, and located several markings that they said resembled circular exhaust burns from a round aircraft, along with some other odd holes and depressions. Some bushes near the animal, they said, seemed to have been crushed to the ground, as if something heavy had settled on them from the air. Then Nellie Lewis's eighty-seven-year-old mother informed them that on the night they calculated Snippy died, she had seen "a large object" pass over her cabin at treetop level. Unfortunately, she wasn't wearing her glasses at the time, so she had no idea what it was.

These things apparently convinced Nellie and Beryl Lewis that their horse had been killed and picked halfway clean by the occupants of a flying saucer. They tried to interest the sheriff in looking at the site. He was too busy. They invited a Forest Service ranger they knew, an amateur scientist who claimed to know how to operate sensitive and touchy Geiger counters, to visit and make some readings near the carcass. He responded and claimed to find unusually high radiation readings near the horse.

Word of the incident and the owners' beliefs spread. People in the area immediately recalled several reports of airborne UFO sightings in the vicinity over the past few years. Snippy began to make the local papers when Nellie Lewis, a rural correspondent for a newspaper in Pueblo, Colorado, phoned in her story, and the Snippy case quickly became the biggest news in the region.

Over the next six weeks or so, the carcass was examined by several veterinarians and pathologists. Most of them said it was too far gone in decay to make clear findings, but they agreed that the animal probably died from natural causes, possibly an infection, and was subsequently stripped and disemboweled by coyotes and other range carnivores. A second Geiger counter reading failed to corroborate the forest ranger's amateur results.

At the same time, a few hundred miles to the north of Alamosa at the University of Colorado, Dr. Edward Condon was running his famous (or infamous) Joint Laboratory project on UFOs. Condon and his staff had been contracted by the U.S. Air Force to take over where their Project Blue Book had left off, evaluating UFO sightings for research purposes. Word of Snippy reached the Joint Laboratory, and Condon sent some people down to investigate. Although they came to no conclusions at all, the Condon project's interest in Snippy was a kind of official acknowledgment that UFOs had been involved. Snippy made the national wire services.

UFO buffs from all over, including APRO members, began calling and visiting the Snippy site. APRO's interest in Snippy was so great that several months later one of its founder-directors, Coral Lorenzen, wrote an article about the case in *Fate* Magazine. It was at this exact point that UFOs and cattle mutilations became permanently associated with one another. Lorenzen's 1968 article about Snippy pitched a strong argument in favor of the gelding's death and mutilation at the hands of saucer-borne aliens, while APRO's position in the 1975 *Gazette-Telegraph* article seemed to have been reversed.

It now became clear why Dorothy Aldridge ended up writing about UFOs and cattle mutilation in APRO's words in 1975, even though there had been no such link strongly suggested by anything that had happened in Colorado up to that point. She was part of the UFO subculture and knew of the connection between UFOs and mutilated cattle.

APRO's interest, and consequently the interest of the rest of the UFO subculture, in the earlier mutilation reports was also easy to track. There are hundreds of thousands of Americans who are fascinated by so-called unexplained phenomena of varying sorts. For proof, you need only scan the supermarket magazine racks and read the headlines on tabloids such as the *National Enquirer,* the *National Examiner,* and the *Star.* Most likely, when the articles on the mutilations started appearing in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Kansas, Oklahoma, and the other states in the early Seventies, they were clipped by fans of the unusual, or APRO stringers, and forwarded to the home office. Why? Because the group had already forged the clasp between the two subjects in the Snippy case in 1967. APRO would naturally have attempted some kind of investigation when the mutilations seemed to grow in number. Their results were conveyed to Aldridge because of her connection to the UFO subculture, and because APRO probably did not miss the significance of the 1975 Colorado mutilations occurring in the home state of the first official animal mutilation, Snippy the horse. This also likely accounted for such UFO speculation in a state where there had been no flying saucer sightings to motivate it.

At this point, late August 1975, there was only one element missing to complete the full flowering of the mutilation phenomenon in Colorado: public conflict among law enforcement authorities. But it was not long in coming.

When the CBI entered the case in early August it had wisely decided that the best course of action was to concentrate on the cattle mutilations, rather than on the phenomenon surrounding them. The Bureau secured the aid of the Diagnostic Laboratory at the College of Veterinary Medicine of Colorado State University. The goal was to send flesh and hide samples of reportedly mutilated cattle, along with whole carcasses if possible, to the pathology department there for analysis.

The CBI wanted to treat the issue exactly as they would a human murder case. They wanted to establish rock-bottom juridical-style facts, as if the results would have to stand up in court. They wanted the cause of death established, microscopic analysis of wounds, accurate determinations about what kind of weapon was used, if any. They wanted to solve the crime, if there was one.

As Dr. McChesney and Carl Whiteside had already told us, many of the reports that came out of the CSU lab concluded that the animals had died of various natural causes and been torn by predators, but a steady few confirmed the possible or definite signs of knife cuts and surgical action. No unusual causes of death were found in these few cases, however, and this raised some questions. Were the animals mutilated after death? Did this mean someone was cruising around the range in a truck or a helicopter looking for fresh carcasses? The seeming confirmations of human responsibility for a few of the mutilations raised more queries than they dispelled, and did nothing to quell the rising fear and confusion on the part of Colorado residents.

Near the end of August, Colorado Governor Richard Lamm made a formal statement to the press about the mutilations. By then there had been about seventy reports throughout the state, most of those in Elbert County. Lamm called the mutilations "one of the greatest outrages in the history of the western cattle industry," and emphasized his wish that all state and local agencies cooperate with the CBI in its investigation.

He delivered the remarks at a meeting of the Colorado Cattleman's Association in Pueblo where the group was officially offering a $5,000 reward for a solution to the mystery. Cattle-raising is a big business in Colorado, and ranchers are voters. The governor was responding to the concerns of his constituents, as would any politician who wanted to find himself in office the following term. Unfortunately, he was also helping the mutilation phenomenon shift from fourth gear into overdrive by making it clear that the state saw the loss of these seventy cows as extremely serious.

Press coverage of Lamm's statement included mention of the widely held theory that some sort of cult was responsible for the carnage. It also noted that the idea of helicopters being used to spot and capture cattle was a matter of serious interest to lawmen. At the end of one of the articles about Lamm's statement there appeared the first sign that things might actually get much worse before they got better, as a result of the CBI's involvement.

Undersheriff Gary Gibbs of the El Paso County Sheriff's Office welcomed Lamm's support, then went on to say, "Ever since the mutilations began we have been fighting the skeptics who have claimed that lightning or predators were responsible for everything." He then voiced a rather oblique complaint about the way the CBI investigation was going:

"We have always tried to cooperate with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, and will in the future, but that cooperation has to be reciprocated. So far we still haven't received any written reports from Fort Collins [the university pathology laboratory] about the carcasses we have sent up there, and we haven't been advised about any meeting the CBI has held regarding the mutilations. We want to cooperate and end these things, but we do feel that all law enforcement agencies must work together to get the job done."

Politics, we noted. Gibbs was speaking for other sheriffs' departments as well, since they had pooled their efforts and information on the cases. Somewhere along the line communications were breaking down, and the well-known rivalries between struggling county departments and muscular, well-funded state agencies were starting to show. Perhaps the comment had been prompted by Lamm's mention that the CSU labs had ascertained that some of the reported mutilations were definitely the work of knife-wielding humans.

In the weeks of September, 1975, the toll of reports mounted. Some unmarked helicopters were chased by night-flying sheriff's deputies. A sheriff in one county insisted that two mutilated animals he investigated had been picked up from one locked pasture, mutilated, and dropped from the air into another pasture two miles away. This claim was covered in depth by Dorothy Aldridge of the *Gazette-Telegraph*. Newspaper accounts written in the same week began to conflict in their mutilation totals: one said 136, another said 175. The National Guard ordered its helicopter pilots to look for any strange activity while on their training missions.

The amount of posted reward money rose to $8,000. Word came in from Oregon and Utah about mutilations there. A Colorado UFO group announced it was launching a special "scientific" investigation into the mutilations. The reward money rose to $11,000.

In a small town called Brush in the northeastern county of Logan, Colorado, the editor of a local weekly agricultural newspaper called the *Brush Banner* began running so many stories about the mutilations that almost entire issues were devoted to the subject. This editor, Dane Edwards, had recently arrived in the town to take over the newspaper. He was not from Colorado, and nobody knew much about him. He began churning out article after article, taking all the current theories about the mutilations to their farthest reaches of believability. He published witchcraft symbols, telling ranchers to post them in their fields because they would frighten the Satanists responsible for the cattle deaths.

His efforts were headlined by Dorothy Aldridge of the *Gazette-Telegraph,* who wrote about how Edwards said he had received threatening phone calls from people who told him he knew too much. She wrote of how he claimed to have witnessed sheriff's department deputies try unsuccessfully to take photographs of a mutilated animal. No matter what they did, he claimed, the photos would not come out. He implied that something supernatural about the carcass was making the camera malfunction. The *Gazette-Telegraph* ran the story under the headline "Witch Drawings to Stave Killers," three columns wide, with illustrations.

Over the succeeding four months, Edwards would not only become well-known to thousands of newspaper readers in the state, but begin to promulgate a theory that the mutilations were actually the work of secret government agencies engaged in conducting clandestine, illegal, and highly dangerous chemical and biological warfare experiments on cattle. Amid shouts of warning, claims that he was being followed, watched, and in great danger of physical harm, Dane Edwards would disappear from Colorado under mysterious circumstances, leaving behind a trail of thousands of dollars in unpaid bills and several warrants for his arrest for fraud. A lot of people wondered if he was just a loudmouthed con artist or if he really did know something incriminating about high government activities.

On October 2, 1975, the *Gazette-Telegraph* published another article by Dorothy Aldridge. Only two columns wide, her shortest yet, and with headline type far smaller than any of her previous pieces, it announced "Annual Death-Rate Calculated Average."

The story discussed the findings of the CSU pathology laboratory in the cases of the reportedly mutilated cattle carcasses and parts sent to them by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. The veterinarians had stated emphatically that the cattle losses in the area, including the mutilations, were well within the expected normal loss rate for that time of year. Their normal figure was about two percent, and the number fell far below that. The piece went on to describe how the laboratory had examined sixteen cases to date. Only five appeared to have been cut by knives. The rest seemed to be normal predator damage. Causes of death could be established in only five cases, and these were all natural. The other carcasses had been too decomposed to support the proper tests.

The article went on to reveal the bitter disagreement with some of the findings by several county sheriffs whose areas had been hard hit with mutilation reports. The CBI spokesman acknowledged that yes, there were mutilations occurring, but their number was far fewer than originally thought, and all had been done to animals already dead from natural causes.

The article signaled the beginning of progressively worsening relations between the CBI and the county sheriffs. Whispers of "cover-up" were starting to flutter up from the counties, and when these collided with Dane Edwards's and others' government conspiracy theories the whispers rose to a buzz of speculation that was still being heard in the state in 1980. The evolution of the cattle mutilation phenomenon in Colorado in 1975 was now complete. The final element, dissension, had been added. What happened from there on in was just a progressive magnification of individual influences.

In late October of 1975, in a closed pen at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo near Colorado Springs, a dead and mutilated full-grown female bison was discovered. The El Paso County coroner and the zoo's veterinarian both publicly agreed that the animal had been cut with a sharp instrument. They were outraged. One ear had been taken, along with the udder, and a perfectly circular patch of hide in front of the udder about two feet in diameter.

The animal had been dead about twenty-four hours when it was found, and since the zoo consists of wide-open fenced ranges, it was possible that the bison had died naturally and predators had entered the outdoor grounds to attack the carcass. But the county coroner and the vet were too sure of their observations; they insisted the buffalo had been cut. The carcass went to CSU for analysis, which was inconclusive.

By October 3, 1975, $10,000 had been added to the reward pool for the capture of the cattle mutilators, bringing the total to $23,000. The CBI began to wonder why no one had come forth to claim it. In most crimes, the solution comes through police contact with individuals on the other side of the law. Someone usually gets arrested for another crime and makes a mistake or a verbal slip that leads to the solution of the crime of interest. Or someone informs: rewards are usually a guarantee that if someone knows something he will pick up the phone and play the rat. But nothing happened. Many people took this departure from the normal as a sure sign that the mutilations were the work of cultists too secretive to want money or too scared to claim it, or of government agencies shrouded in secrecy, or of space aliens who would have no need of cash and so no need to turn in their brother extraterrestrials for Earth money.

By the end of October, Logan County was reporting an increasing number of cattle mutilations. This was Dane Edwards county, and strange things were openly discussed there. The Logan County Sheriff's Office began receiving reports of UFOs. The reports were sparse at first, but took up with increasing frequency.

Statewide, the mutilations began to slow down as the weather got cold. Things died down until the following spring, 1976, when the reports started coming in again.

This time, UFOs were regularly sighted in Logan County more frequently than anywhere else in the state, and they were firmly added by public opinion to a list of possible causes for the cattle mutilations. The CBI, having failed to solve the case, but having proved to its satisfaction that the problem was far smaller than originally assumed, was trying to keep a low profile. Many of the county sheriffs brooded silently, or not so silently, that the CBI had screwed up the investigation, or that they were covering up something very big and very dangerous, like a government conspiracy.

The reports continued coming in 1976 and in 1977, though the numbers were very small. Without state cooperation to foot the bills for pathology lab costs, no serious work was going to be done. The reports were still coming in across Colorado, one here, one there, a dozen or so every spring and summer through 1980.

As far as we could see, the net result of everything that happened in Colorado in 1975 was this: the concept of cattle mutilations as a real factor in stock loss in that state was completely absorbed by the ranching population. Everybody had his own opinion about the cause, and some still said it was only coyotes. And still, no one was sure, conclusively, scientifically sure, who or what caused cattle mutilations, how pervasive they actually were, or whether any of the ideas about them had any merit at all.

6

First Encounters

The Psychic Tapes

On our first one-week trip we planned to go to New Mexico to meet with Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess, and Colorado to see Carl Whiteside and Dr. Albert McChesney. We would collect documents from Whiteside and McChesney: official CBI reports on the investigation into the 1975 mutilations in Colorado, and copies of the original necropsy reports on mutilated animals prepared by Colorado State University. Our last stop on the trip would be an all-night session on the Tony Larson radio show in Denver, our national appeal for help and information from his listeners who had, after all, led us into the cattle mutilations to begin with.

About a week before we departed, Peter Jordan gave us tape cassettes of the sessions he had conducted with his New Jersey psychic. The tapes held all the readings and images she had received from the photographs of cattle mutilations he had given her. Most of these photos had been of the mutilated animals found on the ranch of Manuel Gomez, on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation in Dulce, New Mexico. Since these were some of the animals Gabe Valdez had investigated, we would bring the tapes to him and see if any of the psychic's clues struck him as meaningful.

Of course, most psychic readings are flimsy and often fraudulent at best, outright hoaxes at the very worst. But it was worth a shot. We dutifully played the tapes and wrote down all the nouns and place descriptions on them. We would not only present the list to Valdez, but would try to be on the lookout for any of the symbols ourselves.

The psychic readings were strongly slanted toward some kind of conspiracy involving the military, helicopters, manned helium balloons, and secret underground bases. They also involved the participation of laboratory scientists in a grand scheme to cover up the true purpose of the cattle mutilations. The psychic had gotten images of nuclear facilities, jet planes, and rockets near the mutilations. This was fascinating, because the Gomez ranch was in New Mexico, and the state was the home of the largest uranium mine in the United States, Los Alamos Laboratories and Sandia Laboratories, both weapons research facilities, and also of White Sands Missile Range, the testing ground for advanced rocket vehicles.

Our attitude for this first journey had been formed for the most part by the kind of contact we had had so far with others interested in the mutilations. We were alert to the shadow of conspiracy and frankly mistrustful of official sources, particularly high-level authorities like the CBI and the lab at Colorado State University.

We drove directly from the Albuquerque airport to meet Valdez at the tribal police station in Dulce. Dark, compact, and muscular, Valdez comes in at about five foot eight and close to two hundred pounds, none of it fat. He lifts weights to break the boredom and isolation of the long winters in Dulce. In 1978 Valdez was named State Policeman of the Year by the New Mexico State Police. He had singlehandedly captured an armed and dangerous murder suspect who had been at large for several months.

Gabe took us to his home, which was just up the hill in the cluster of small houses. He introduced us to his young sons and his wife, Margie. We set up in the living room: notebooks and tape recorder; Gabe pulled out a thick stack of files.

"These are all my reports. I have stuff from other states, too. You can have copies of whatever you need," he said. We recapped with him the history of the New Mexico cattle mutilations, and we mentally fleshed out the story with details we had picked up from our research.

In the late fall of 1975, northern New Mexico had experienced about a dozen reports of mutilated cattle. If you looked at a map, these might have the appearance of a minor slop-over across the border from the raging wave of mutilation reports and controversy that were jolting Colorado at the same time. There was also a flurry of reports of what the *Albuquerque Journal* called "ghost copters," unidentified helicopters buzzing ranch houses and cruising over rangeland at night with bright spotlights aimed toward the ground. None of the state or military authorities, including the local Federal Aviation Administration, had been able to identify the craft or pinpoint their place of origin. Passing reference was made to the cattle mutilations, and some ranchers had speculated that the two events might be connected.

On June 13, 1976, eight months after the initial ripple of mutilation reports in New Mexico, Manuel Gomez had telephoned Gabe Valdez and told him he thought one of his cows had been mutilated. At five o'clock the next morning, Valdez, along with Paul Riley of the New Mexico Cattle Sanitary Board, went to the Gomez summer range, thirteen miles from Dulce. There Valdez found the carcass of a three-year-old cow lying on its side. His report, New Mexico State Police Offense/Incident Report number 027675, reads:

"The left ear, the tongue, the udder, and the rectum had been removed with what appeared to be a sharp precise instrument. No traces of blood were left on the skin of the cow. The hide on the underneath side of the cow was white so that spotting of blood would have been easily detected. Other evidence on the cow was a small puncture wound on the brisket.

"Investigation continued around the area and revealed that a suspected aircraft of some type had landed twice, leaving three pod marks positioned in a triangular shape. The diameter of each pod part was 14 inches. The perimeter around the three pods was 16-1/2 feet (6' x 5' x 5-1/2'). Emanating from the two landings were smaller triangular shaped tripods 28 inches apart and 4 inches in diameter. Investigation at the scene showed that these small tripods had followed the cow for approximately 600 feet. Tracks of the cow showed where she had struggled and fallen.

The small tripod tracks were all around the cow. Other evidence showed that grass around the tripods, as they followed the cow, had been scorched."

Valdez had also found an oily yellow substance in the middle of the small tripod prints. This substance, along with a sample of the cow's hide, had been submitted to laboratories for analysis. The oily substance was never identified, because when the private laboratory it was sent to received the container, the sample had "deteriorated or disintegrated," in Valdez's words. The State Police lab and the Medical Examiner's Office confirmed from the hide sample that the flesh of the cow had indeed been cut with a sharp instrument.

A radio news announcer in Albuquerque named Zane Blaney had called Valdez to pick up details of the mutilation. Valdez asked him if he knew anyone reliable who could come up and take some radiation readings at the site. Blaney had a friend named Howard Burgess, who was a retired instrumentation designer, late of Sandia Laboratories in Albuquerque. Valdez contacted Burgess and asked him for help. Three days after the cow was found, Burgess went to Dulce and pointed a Geiger counter at the triangular pod marks on the ground of Manuel Gomez's pasture. He reported that the radiation readings in and around the tripod marks were twice those of the normal background level. Valdez's report says:

"It is the opinion of this writer that radiation findings are deliberately being left at the scene to confuse investigators."

The report goes on to reveal that Valdez had conducted "intensive investigation into 23 cattle mutilations which had been reported in New Mexico within the last 16 months." It notes that Valdez had been working with Sheriff Tex Graves in Logan County, Colorado, in his investigations into the mutilations there. The report goes on to say that Valdez had had substances analyzed that had been found on the hide of a cow from Logan County. The results indicated that the material had been some kind of ion exchange resin and Vitamin B-12. The report states that Valdez's research had ruled out any involvement in cattle mutilations by Satanic cults or predators, "due to expertise and preciseness and the cost involved to conduct such a sophisticated and secretive operation."

The report concluded that "Investigation has narrowed down to these three theories which involve (1) Experimental use of Vitamin B-12 and (2) The testing of the lymph node system. During this investigation an intensive study has been made of (3) What is involved in germ warfare testing, and the possible correlation of these three factors (germ warfare testing, use of Vitamin B-12, testing of the lymph node system)."

There were no more mutilation reports in Valdez's territory until two years later. On April 4, 1978, Manuel Gomez again phoned Valdez and said he had another dead animal that looked like it had been mutilated. The animal was an eleven-month-old bull, and it was in the fenced pasture adjacent to Gomez's ranch house, about 600 yards from the front door. The Gomez house sits almost astride the locked gate into the pasture, which is its only entrance. Valdez's official report read:

"Investigation showed that this . . . bull was dropped by some type of aircraft north of Mr. Gomez's ranch house. The rectum and sex organs had been removed with a sharp and precise instrument. The pelvic bone had also been removed. The bull sustained visible bruises around the brisket area seeming to indicate that a strap was used to lift and lower the animal to and from the aircraft . . . prints were found 100 feet north of the slain animal. These four-inch-diameter round footprints led to the animal and back 100 feet where they apparently returned to a hovering aircraft. The imprints appeared quite heavy since the ground was dry and hard and automobile tire tracks from the police car were barely visible."

Although these prints were not arrayed in a triangular shape, they were the same size and depth as the ones found near the Gomez cow mutilated two years before.

The animal had last been seen alive by Manuel Gomez the night before. It had been found dead at 7:30 that morning. Gomez had been awake until after midnight and had heard nothing unusual. A New Mexico Game and Fish officer had reported seeing a large, round orange light moving through the sky over the Gomez ranch that night.

Valdez had called Howard Burgess and told him to come up. They opened the animal's carcass and removed samples of its heart and liver. He noted in his report that both organs were "white and mushy. Both organs had the consistency of peanut butter."

He sent a sample of the heart, a piece of skeletal muscle, and some bone fragments to Dr. Donald F. Peterson at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratories for analysis. He had to ask permission of the governor of New Mexico, Jerry Apodaca, to involve the laboratory. Samples of the heart and liver and were also sent to Schoenfeld Laboratories, a private lab in Albuquerque. Dr. Robert Schoenfeld, the laboratory's head, was a friend and associate of Howard Burgess.

The findings from Los Alamos were inconclusive. Peterson's team had found nothing to indicate the cause of the animal's death. *Clostridium* bacilli had been found in the heart chamber, but Los Alamos attached no significance to this, because despite the fact that many common and fatal cattle diseases, including blackleg, are caused by various *Clostridia*, the microbes are also ubiquitous throughout the soil of all pastureland. They generally enter the carcass of any dead animal and start to multiply soon after death. Over all, Peterson's findings indicated nothing out of the ordinary. He did comment, however, that the sampling procedure might have been less than sterile, and that the tissues might have been contaminated or frozen after they were removed.

Valdez had later challenged Dr. Peterson on his comments, saying that he had not frozen the samples, and had been extremely careful not to contaminate them. He was quoted in an article by David Perkins in the *Boulder Monthly* almost a year later as saying, "I don't even think they tested those samples. Howard Burgess says they couldn't have—they had the report out in thirty-six hours and it takes longer than that to run a culture . . . we didn't freeze them. We did everything right. They made us look like fools!"*

The results from Schoenfeld Laboratories indicated that compared with a control liver sample from a piece of liver bought in a supermarket, the mutilated animal's liver seemed to be abnormally devoid of copper. It had only seven-hundredths of one percent of the level of copper in the control. The tests also seemed to indicate that the mutilated bull's liver was abnormally high in phosphorus, zinc, and potassium, according to Valdez and Burgess.

Valdez, along with Burgess, combined these findings with the pale yellowish color of the liver and Valdez's observation that "the blood which came off the animal's nose . . . was light pink in color." They concluded that these factors indicated the animal might have been exposed to microwave radiation, which Burgess affirmed could cause all of the abnormal effects observed. Valdez concluded in his report that this radiation had in fact been used to kill the animal. For Valdez, this seemed to point even more emphatically in the direction of some kind of surreptitious testing program.

Four days later, Manuel Gomez reported to Gabe that he had found another mutilated bull. The animal had been dead about five days, so Valdez took no samples. He noted in his report that the sex organs had been surgically removed, along with the lower lip.

Two weeks later, on May 5, 1978, Raleigh Tafoya, chief of the Jicarilla Apache Tribal Police, reported a mutilated cow on his ranch twenty-three miles outside of Dulce. Valdez had reported that the cow's rectum, sex organs, tongue, and ears had been removed. Again, there was pinkish blood issuing from the nose. His report also states that the "left front and left rear leg were pulled out of their sockets apparently from the weight of the cow which indicates that it was lifted and dropped back to the ground."

About 600 yards away from the carcass, Valdez found several of the same kind of four-inch-diameter round marks that he had found near the two Gomez animals. He noted in his report that the mutilated animals he had seen all dehydrated very rapidly.

About two weeks later another Dulce rancher, Howard Vigil, who lives in sight of the Gomez ranch, reported a pair of mutilated Hereford cows. Dead for five days, they were too decomposed for samples to be taken. Valdez again noted that their left front and rear legs were broken, "which indicates that the animals were lifted by their extremities." Both showed pinkish blood at their nostrils. The report ends with the words "Evidence of turbulence from an aircraft was apparent."

On June 14, 1978, Manuel Gomez again called Gabe to report a mutilated animal. This four-year-old Hereford cow had been pastured on Gomez's summer range, thirteen miles east of Dulce.

"The carcass was lying on its right side with tongue and sex organs precisely removed," wrote Valdez. "Pinkish blood from her nose was visible and the left front leg was broken and also the left rear leg was broken."

This animal also showed a new kind of trace. "Marks were visible on the lower left rear leg where some type of clamp or device had been fastened," he reported. "Investigation showed that the animal was taken elsewhere and mutilated and then returned and dropped. This animal had five-inch horns. One horn was broken off into the ground."

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*_Boulder Monthly_, January 1979, "The Phantom Cattle Surgeons of the Plains," Perkins.

The cow had been dead for at least twenty-four hours, so no test samples were taken. The carcass was within 800 yards of the spot where Gomez's first mutilated cow had been found two years before.

David Perkins of the Animal Mutilation Probe in Colorado and Tom Adams of Project Stigma both visited this mutilation site within a few days. They, Valdez, and Burgess examined the carcass, and spent hours discussing the various theories about who was mutilating the animals and why. They were particularly interested in why Manuel Gomez's herd seemed to be a special target.

Since both Valdez and Burgess felt that their investigation was edging toward the idea that the cattle were being spotted from the air, picked up by some sort of craft, mutilated, and then dropped to earth, they assumed that the animals to be mutilated would have to be marked somehow so they could be located from the air in the dark.

On July 16, 1978, Burgess, Valdez, and Gomez hung an ultraviolet light over a narrow squeeze chute, and herded about seventy of Gomez's cattle through. Two four-year-old cows and three two-month-old calves showed distinct fluorescent markings on the foreparts of their bodies. They thought that perhaps the airborne mutilators would shine a black light down on the herd grazing in the darkness, and identify victims by the fluorescent reflection. A greater mystery was how the mutilators managed to enter the Gomez property to mark the animals in the first place.

Burgess took samples of the fluorescent material on the animals' hides and sent it to Schoenfeld Laboratories for analysis. Dr. Schoenfeld's analysis showed that the substance had a high concentration of potassium and magnesium. The amount of potassium in the fluorescent hide samples was seventy times higher than the level of the same element in the control hide samples given him by Burgess,* taken from parts of the cows that had shown no fluorescent glow. This was curious, but it became even more intriguing when Burgess and Valdez got word

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Albuquerque Journal, Dec. 13, 1978, "New Findings Deepen Mystery of Mutilations," Fritz Thompson.

of a strange occurrence that had taken place at Taos, New Mexico, about one hundred miles southeast of Dulce, several days before their test.

On July 1, 1978, several Taos families had seen a bright orange light, a UFO, hovering low over a parked pickup truck. One witness described it as "roundish, and about as big as two cars."* It was brilliant orange and had attracted the witness's attention because its light had spilled through the drawn drapes of her house. She had thought her neighbor's house was on fire. The object hovered over the truck for about two minutes, faded to a gray color, and then "took off to the north and disappeared in two seconds."*

The next morning, someone examined the truck and found chips of a thin, whitish substance on the roof of the cab, which were collected and placed in a jar. Howard Burgess went to Taos and got a small sample of the chips. He brought them to Schoenfeld Laboratories. Dr. Schoenfeld analyzed them and told the *Albuquerque Journal* that they contained large amounts of potassium and magnesium—the same elements found in high concentration on the fluorescent patches of the hides of the Gomez cattle tested by Burgess and Valdez a few nights later.*

The chips also contained many other elements including "sodium, aluminum, phosphorus, barium, bismuth, platinum, vanadium, and strontium."* Schoenfeld told the *Journal* that all the elements could be found in the soil, "but if you say they were found on top of a pickup cab, there would have to be something to have moved it up there."* He thought the chips might be a film of oxidized metal.

Although Howard Burgess declined to speculate on whether the UFO incident and the substance found on the cattle hides were connected, he said he found the idea "intriguing."* The connection did, however, fit neatly with his and Valdez's ideas about unusual aircraft lifting cattle into the sky to mutilate them. The witness's description of the UFO also matched the glowing orange aircraft sighted several times near Dulce.

Within the next two months, Valdez had investigated several more mutilations around Dulce. He reported that one of the animals had suffered a broken neck, and had a rather large hole in its jugular vein. In one case, the mutilated animal was a

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Albuquerque Journal, Dec. 13, 1978, "New Findings Deepen Mystery of Mutilations," Fritz Thompson.

"pregnant [sic] heifer." The unborn fetus, his report said, had been found near the mother with its head "precisely removed." Other animals had had patches of hide cut from them, and eyes cleanly cut out, according to his reports.

By December 30, 1978, Valdez's investigation, along with several dozen more reports of mutilations in northern New Mexico, had attracted enough press coverage and angry calls for aid from ranchers that Senator Harrison Schmitt stepped in and announced he would take steps to try and involve the Federal government in the investigation. This was the prelude to the conference Schmitt would sponsor in Albuquerque the following April. Valdez's support and information became instrumental in helping the senator plan his approach to the problem.

On April 8, 1979, about two weeks before the Schmitt conference was to be held, an unidentified aircraft was spotted over Dulce and chased. It made the New Mexico papers. Two officers from the Jicarilla Tribal police were patrolling the dark night roads not too far from the Gomez ranch. They were driving with their lights off, looking for teenagers parking and drinking. The officers surprised the aircraft, which was hovering about fifty feet off the ground, playing a powerful spotlight at the earth.

Valdez was in his patrol cruiser about four miles away. When the two tribal police opened radio contact with Valdez, "the aircraft turned off its spotlight, rose swiftly, and flew south."* As Valdez raced to the spot, he saw the craft pass over him at an altitude of about one hundred feet. He reported that it had blue and green lights, but that he couldn't make out its size. He said it "had to be" some kind of helicopter because he saw it move vertically and horizontally. He told the press that he definitely thought the craft had something to do with the cattle mutilations.

The L.E.A.A. grant had been awarded to the First District Attorney's Office four days after the Schmitt conference, and Ken Rommel was now the officially designated cattle mutilation investigator in New Mexico. He and Valdez seemed to maintain a kind of cordial silence between them. Rommel's attributed comments about discrediting people and putting a stop to the mutilation nonsense had touched Valdez, who is a proud man.

Since the last major wave of mutilations in the United States had occurred in New Mexico, since Valdez had been the prime investigator and coordinator of all inquiries into them, and since he worked closely with Howard Burgess, who had some scientific training, Valdez had become the most recent in a long line of number-one official sources for anyone interested in gathering information about the cattle mutilations. Rommel seemed to have a habit of refusing to talk to the press, and of being stingy with details of his investigation. Consequently, Valdez was still the police officer everyone was referred to when they expressed interest in the New Mexico mutilations.

We had, for the moment, rejected the idea that the mutilations could be the work of a Satanic or magical cult: as so many people had pointed out, such a group would have to be large and well-funded. They could not reasonably keep their existence a secret for so long a time as the mutilations had been taking place.

The idea of UFOs, in this case meaning flying saucers or alien craft from other planets or dimensions, peopled by non-human life forms, was equally unattractive. We had seen no real proof supporting the hypothesis beyond the reports of sightings in mutilation-prone areas. Also, the promoters of the UFO stance seemed a bit hysterical.

The notion of some kind of conspiracy of human beings, using either highly advanced technology or common technology designed to simulate bizarre events, was the most plausible of the lot at that point. Valdez's reports certainly supported these concepts. Even the motivations were there: Perkins's proximity relationships between mutilated animals and mineral deposits and petroleum fields. The aim of the conspiracy might have some long-range goal of social and political manipulation, psychotronic/psychological warfare as described by Vallee, or it might be tied to mineral exploration, particularly for uranium.

Given that this sort of conspiracy would have to be tied into large energy companies mining both petroleum and uranium, the government might also be involved, went the logic. As for Howard Burgess's idea about microwave radiation being used on the mutilated Gomez cattle, joining the mineral exploration angle to the idea of clandestine military experimentation with secret weapons, this was easy to swallow in New Mexico, where everywhere you looked there were tightly shrouded facilities engaged in exactly those pursuits: Sandia Laboratories in Albuquerque, Los Alamos Laboratories, White Sands Missile Range,

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***Albuquerque Journal*, Dec. 13, 1978. "New Findings Deepen Mystery of Mutilations," Fritz Thompson.

and God knew what other top-security installations, too secret even to have names, that were engaged in the development of esoteric weaponry. The Air Force had recently announced that they would begin testing laser weapons at White Sands this year: only a day's drive to the south of Dulce, people were fooling with honest-to-goodness death rays out in the desert flats. What limits were there to what could happen in a state like New Mexico?

David Perkins's proximity theory about the secret monitoring of unpublicized radioactive pollution also fit nicely with the mutilations in New Mexico and Valdez's reports. In 1967, the Atomic Energy Commission had detonated an underground nuclear blast on the very edge of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, about forty miles south of Dulce. The blast was called Operation Gasbuggy, and was part of the Agency's Project Plowshare program, aimed at developing peaceful applications for nuclear devices.

Gasbuggy was a thirty-kiloton explosion designed to pulverize underground rock formations that were capping a sizable deposit of natural gas. The blast was to free the gas for drilling, and also create an underground chimney of smashed rock to funnel it to the surface.

The test went well, but monitoring revealed that the gas released by the explosion was contaminated with radioactive isotopes of krypton-85, argon-37, and tritium. The gas was too contaminated for use.

The radioactive krypton and argon were vented into the atmosphere, without any ill effects, according to the AEC reports. The tritium, a radioactive hydrogen isotope in plain water, did what water will do: it entered the water table of the area. A report from the U.S. Department of Energy notes that small amounts were detectable in the environment as late as September 1978, but that "in no case, however, were the tritium concentration levels considered as radiological health problems during these tests." True or not, the proximity of Gasbuggy to the Dulce mutilations gave some loft to the idea of cattle mutilations as a secret sampling operation for nuclear contaminants.

Dulce and Gabe Valdez might be the plexus where some of the network's hypotheses about the cause and motivation for the cattle mutilations would finally be proved out.

Taking all this into consideration, we had listened one last time before we left for Dulce to the tapes of the psychic's readings.

They had been filled with descriptions of places, names and people that suggested some kind of corporate or military conspiracy. She saw men in uniforms, secret underground laboratories, security gates and guards sealing off the entryways of official buildings whose parking lots were filled with Cadillacs and Lincolns. She saw military teams precisely organizing their cattle-mutilation activities. And she kept seeing balloons: manned helium balloons floating silently over the rugged terrain of northern New Mexico.

Valdez's reports repeatedly referred to strange landing gear imprints, and UFOs that moved both horizontally and vertically. The mysterious aircraft he had seen last April had passed over him without making a sound. Helium balloons were as silent as the air. We had done some research on manned helium craft and found that, contrary to the old-fashioned image of the helium balloon as a passive, mammoth bubble drifting at the wind's caprice, helium balloons are extremely maneuverable, particularly at low altitudes. Close to the ground, balloon pilots could drop long trail ropes from the gondola to the earth. These would drag on the ground, and by swiveling them like a ship's rudder you could radically change the balloon's direction, steer it like a boat. In addition, by hauling in the ropes or playing them out, the balloon's altitude could be immediately altered. The limits to this vertical motion were drawn only by the length of the trail ropes, and they theoretically could be hundreds of feet long. Therefore, a low-flying manned helium balloon could come sailing in over Dulce at an altitude of between fifty and a hundred feet, steering itself agilely over the ground, and zooming up and down between ground level and several hundred feet with no sophisticated equipment whatever. And this could all be accomplished in dead silence.

Helium balloons can also have respectable payload capacity. A medium-sized bag could easily lift a full-grown cow or bull. All you would have to do was drop a load of ballast slightly greater than the animal's weight to get it off the ground. If you didn't want the ballast left at the scene, you could use water instead of buckshot or sand. When you sprayed it over the ground, it would disappear almost immediately. You would rise up into the air with your cow immobilized by tranquilizers or dead from an overdose of microwave radiation spewed out by the compact weapon mounted on the balloon's gondola.

After mutilating the animal aboard the gondola, which could hang steadily in the air, perhaps just below the level of a nearby ridge to afford seclusion, you would use your trial ropes, and perhaps a small, silent electric motor with a slowly rotating propeller on it, to return to the pasture where the animal had been snatched. You would begin to vent helium from the gas envelope, decreasing lift and settling toward the ground. At about fifty feet you'd kick the carcass overboard. Lightened, the balloon would immediately leap up vertically, but you'd quickly slow the ascent by venting more gas. When the balloon stabilized, perhaps at 1,000 feet, you'd use either the prevailing wind or your little electric motor to drift a few miles from the mutilation site.

You'd bring the bag to earth, empty it, fold it, and pack and stow the whole unit, gondola and all, into your waiting van. Then you'd drive off into the night.

The scenario was almost too elegant. It certainly gave us reason to pay serious attention to the psychic readings. The woman kept seeing those balloons, and they would be the perfect aircraft to fulfill all the requirements not only of Valdez's reports, but of dozens of other cases in other states. If we combined our balloon research with the psychic tapes, and then with all the other factors surrounding the Dulce mutilations—Project Gasbuggy, uranium mining, radioactive pollution, secret weapons research labs all over New Mexico, Valdez's reports of landing gear prints and odd aircraft—it started to look like a break in the cattle mutilation case right there, if we could only fill in the blanks.

We wanted Valdez to listen to the tapes, and he was excited at the idea of psychic clues. He had been with this thing so long that he welcomed help from any quarter. He also wanted to scoop Rommel and solve the case himself. Margie Valdez served coffee. We flipped the start switch of the tape recorder and sat back.

The voice on the tape said she kept getting the name "Pendleton." There was, she said, someone named Pendleton involved with the mutilations. Valdez looked at us.

"This is a joke, right?" he asked. We stopped the tape. "No. Why?"

"I'm working with a guy named Pendleton right now," he said. "I sent him some pictures of the Gomez bull. He's a veterinarian in Utah. He's analyzing them."

We started the tape again. Almost immediately, Valdez jumped up and snapped it off. The psychic had been describing an abandoned convent or mission with a bell over the gate and a well in the courtyard.

"That's the old Monastery of Christ," he said. "It's about eighty miles south of here, along Highway 84." We had passed within ten miles of it on our way up. We marked it on our map. We started the tape again.

The psychic's voice described a gateway to a building of some kind. It had a drop gate and stop lights. "That sounds like the entrance to Sandia Labs at Kirtland Air Force Base," said Gabe.

The voice on the tape described a "ghost town that had now been taken over by the government for some reason." Valdez stopped the tape again.

"That's probably the Ghost Ranch," he said. The Ghost Ranch is a museum, a restored ghost town. It is run by the state government.

On our map, the Ghost Ranch was ten miles due east of the abandoned Monastery of Christ, on the other side of the highway. The two circles that marked them were side by side.

The tape continued. The psychic said she kept getting the words "Audler" or "Audli," along with the word "Mase." She thought this might be someone's name, Mase Audler. A few seconds later she said something about seeing an auditorium or stadium, where people would go to look at or listen to something. This site, she said, was near the place with the bell in the courtyard, which Valdez had identified as the Monastery of Christ. The three of us examined the map. Suddenly, Valdez smacked the table, jumped up, and began pacing back and forth.

"Look at the map," he said, and pointed. His thick finger was resting on a notation that said "Echo Amphitheatre." It was directly across the highway from Ghost Ranch. We remembered passing it, too, on our way to Dulce. The amphitheatre was also ten miles due east of the abandoned Monastery of Christ.

Echo Amphitheatre was a natural formation, a gigantic concave reflecting bowl the wind had carved out of the sandstone on the sheer side of a large mesa. If one stood close to it and made a sound, the bowl would reflect and magnify it in a bell-clear litany of fading echoes.

Echo Amphitheatre is a state park, and the approach to it is lined with sculptured paths and picnic tables. It is possible to eat your lunch at the focal point of the echo bowl and hear every crackle from the cellophane from your bag of potato chips zipping and popping around your head, magnified and thrown back to you by the formation's deep curve.

"Audli" was clearly "auditorium," a near analogy to Echo Amphitheatre, and "Mase" was "mesa," the formation out of which the auditorium was carved. The 200-foot wall out of which Echo was blasted is in the side of Mesa de los Viejos. Audli, auditorium, amphitheatre; mase, mesa.

When we circled Echo Amphitheatre on the map, the three loops representing it, the Monastery of Christ, and the Ghost Ranch fell together edgewise like the links of a chain.

So far this psychic was generating some respectable information. Why, we wondered, was she describing these three locations all clustered together eighty miles south of where the mutilations had happened? Gabe rummaged in one of his file folders and handed us a newspaper clipping. It told how a large mining firm in Albuquerque had recently acquired uranium mining rights to a segment of the Carson National Forest. Back to the map. The parcel of ore-rich land was less than ten miles up the highway from the Ghost Ranch, Echo, and the monastery.

We asked Gabe from which direction the orange UFO, as well as the strange aircraft he had chased, had come.

"From the southeast," he replied without hesitation. All the points described by the psychic, as well as the mining claim, were clustered together southeast of Dulce. We looked at each other.

"How remote is Mesa de Los Viejos?" we asked.

Gabe told us the nearest town was about ten miles away. Besides, it was high and wild, and the only way up to its top was with a horse, a four-wheel drive vehicle, or by helicopter.

"Or by balloon," we all said almost simultaneously. We asked Valdez how far-fetched he thought our balloon theory was.

"Not crazy at all," he said. This was balloon country. There was an annual hot air balloon race out of Albuquerque every year which drew the attention of the world press. There were helium balloons around, too. There was nothing unusual about owning a balloon in New Mexico. In fact, the world heavyweight balloon champions lived right in Albuquerque. The city was the home of two of the three men who had been the first to complete a transatlantic balloon flight, in 1978. Not only that, but one of these men was the owner of the uranium mining concern that held the lease just granted on the piece of uranium-rich land right next to Mesa de los Viejos, Echo Amphitheatre, and Ghost Ranch. Balloons, uranium, and the psychic tape had just been perfectly coupled together.

"The orange UFO comes in from the southeast, right?" we asked. "Yeah," said Valdez. Suppose, we suggested, the psychic was onto something? Suppose she had gotten pictures of Echo, the Ghost Ranch, and the monastery because they had something to do with how the animals were being mutilated? Let's suppose, we continued, that these places came to her because they all surround the launching site for the mutilators' balloon? And suppose that site is Mesa de los Viejos: high, difficult to reach, smack in the middle of all three landmarks she had envisioned, and southeast of Dulce?

"Sounds good to me," said Gabe. "I bet that's what's happening." There was a knock at the door.

"That must be Manuel," said Valdez. He introduced us to the rancher who had lost so many of his cattle to mutilations, Manuel Gomez. Tall, leathery, soft-spoken, and wearing a cowboy hat, Gomez had a perpetual half-smile and bore a striking resemblance to the actor Buddy Ebsen. Shaking his hand was like grasping an unsanded pine board: he was obviously not an armchair rancher. He worked his herd himself, with the help of his five children.

With him was his son, Edmond. He was short and powerfully built, and his face was perpetually serious, in contrast to his father's. We sat. Manuel perched at the edge of a chair with his hat in his hands, looking like an old-fashioned cowboy doing his best to be quiet and respectful in church. He sat that way throughout the entire conversation.

The Gomezes spoke of their mutilated animals. Manuel was evasive when we asked him if he had any ideas about what caused them. Edmond, on the other hand, was outspoken, even angry.

He studied animal sciences at the New Mexico University Agricultural School. He knows about breeding, cattle management, and enough veterinary medicine to diagnose and treat most common cattle ills. Edmond thought the mutilations might have something to do with dangerous genetic experimentation.

He described the orange UFO. He had seen it several times, coming up from the southeast, following the ridgeline that ran beside the Gomez ranch and bounded its western edge. He and his father retold the story of how they found the mutilated bull in the pasture right outside the front door of their home. Their voices resonated with amazement and frustration, as if the incident had happened yesterday rather than two years ago. These did not seem the kind of people who would make up fairy tales about dead cows and spacemen.

Valdez produced some color photos of the bull. They were the first we had seen of a mutilated animal.

The young bull lay on its side in the middle of dry, hard earth. We could clearly see the small neat-looking wound where its penis had been removed. There was a darkened area across its brisket, the chest area, which corresponded to Valdez's reported finding of a bruise he believed to be from some sort of lifting strap.

Gabe suggested we take a ride. He wanted to take us to the Gomez ranch and also show us the summer pasture where the other animals had been found. He would also retrace for us the route he had followed when he chased the mystery aircraft around Dulce last year.

The four of us walked out into the dark and squeezed into Valdez's police car. He sped away from his house, down the hill, past the motel and police station, and rocketed through the gravel in the turn onto the road to the Gomez ranch. Valdez must have reached eighty miles per hour over the mile or so to the Gomez ranch. It was pitch dark, but he knew every ripple in the road. Valdez drives as though he is possessed by the devil himself. He is a specialist in the high-speed chase; he seems forever in hot pursuit.

We arrived at the Gomez home. Edmond and Manuel went inside, and emerged less than two minutes later. Edmond had a determined expression on his face and a large-caliber hunting rifle with a scope in his hand. We smiled. He did not smile back.

"What's that for?" we asked, gesturing at the rifle.

"Never can tell when you might need it," he replied. "Yeah," said Valdez. "I wish that orange light would come back. I'd shoot the son-of-a-bitch down so fast."

Back in the police cruiser, we tore along through the darkness. Valdez whipped and skidded the car through the rough roads while taking full part in the four-way conversation in the car. We asked Edmond about Indian legends, supernatural manifestations. Had he ever heard tales about demons, ghost creatures, skin walkers?

"Yes," he answered, and said no more.

"Well, what about them?"

"The Indians believe all that stuff is real," he said. "Coyote men, were-coyotes who can change from human to animal and back." He lapsed into another uncomfortable silence.

"Do you put any stock in that stuff?" we asked.

He was silent a while. "I've seen some things," he said. Edmond did not want to enter this subject. We, however, were fresh from the city, and we wanted some local color. "What have you seen?" we asked.

Edmond cradled his rifle between his knees and curled tightly into the corner of the back seat. "Our family has had this land for over a hundred years," he said. "Gomezes have worked and lived and died here. The old folks knew the Indians, they knew all about their religion. I had one uncle, died years ago. He was, well, he had some strange experiences. Once he was driving along the road in a wagon, and he saw a little old Indian lady walking in the road up ahead. She was all wrapped in black, with a shawl over her head. That's the way they dressed. He was going to offer her a ride. When he pulled up alongside and leaned down to talk, he looked at where her face should have been, and there was nothing there. It was just a set of empty black clothes with no one inside, walking down the road like a person in the middle of the day. Indian witchcraft," he said. He stared out the window. Gravel raised by Valdez's mad careening rattled against the glass.

"What happened to this uncle?"

"He died, nothing unusual," said Edmond. "He's buried up there in the graveyard."

At the far side of the Gomez ranch, about 600 yards from the house, was a small family cemetery. You could see it from the front door. Generations of Gomezes had been buried there. Earlier, Edmond and Gabe had shown us something there. We stood on the dark road in front of the Gomez house and looked across the black expanse toward the graveyard more than a quarter-mile away. Edmond handed over his rifle and pointed toward the cemetery.

"Look over there," he said, "and you'll see a light."

There was a dim, fluorescent pinpoint floating several feet above the ground.

"There's a gravestone in there," he explained. "It glows in the dark. If you walk up to it, as soon as you get close the glow disappears."

The scope on the rifle was a night finder, which amplified light. Through it we could see the blurred, humped shapes of the grave markers. There was a bright glowing patch among them.

"Remember that fluorescent stuff we found on the cows?" Valdez had asked. "We've been thinking that whoever marked those animals might have spilled some of that liquid on the gravestone, you know, by accident, as they were flying over. Or maybe they marked it on purpose, as some kind of landing guide, so they could find the place at night from the air."

Valdez had told us how he had originally thought the glow was reflected light from one of the sparsely placed outdoor utility lamps around Dulce. Using his official authority, he had stood one night in this same spot and ordered that all the electricity for Dulce be turned off for five minutes so he could see if the glow would disappear, proving itself to be a reflection. The lights went out. The glow did not. Valdez intended to have the stone analyzed sometime to see what caused the effect.

"Edmond, which grave belongs to that uncle?"

"The one with the glowing tombstone," he said, not bothering to turn his head from the darkened window. We bashed along the road in silence for a few minutes, until Valdez fishtailed to a stop.

"Here's the summer pasture," he said. He flipped on the movable spotlight on his door and pointed out the rising hill, the entrance gate at its crest. It was too dark to go up and poke around. He spun the car around and headed back toward Dulce. A few minutes later, we stopped again. The spotlight stabbed out and illuminated a large steel hopper on the side of the road, about fifty feet high. A pile of gravel stood next to it. "Here's the mixing plant," Valdez said. "Here's where the tribal police caught that UFO last year. It was hovering right over that hopper."

Wheeling off again, Valdez sped around some sharp curves and halted. "Here's where I was when they radioed me. It's four miles from the mixer." It seemed like we had just covered the distance in about thirty seconds.

"As soon as they turned on the radio, the thing took off." He churned off again and narrated as he drove.

"I saw it come up over there," he pointed. We slammed into a turn.

"It flew right over me, about a hundred feet up." Gravel spewed from under the wheels, dark clumps of rock and vegetation flashed by.

"I followed as well as I could." Hard left. Bump. Stop.

"I finally lost it. It went over that way and disappeared." He was pointing northwest. We were back on the road to the Gomez place: the house was to our left, and Gabe was pointing over the ridge that runs beside the house. If you followed the ridge back down in the other direction, southeast, you'd end up at Mesa de los Viejos, Echo Amphitheatre, and the Ghost Ranch.

Manuel and Edmond said goodnight. We returned to Gabe's house.

"I think this balloon thing is the answer," said Gabe.

"Where do we go from here?" we asked.

"I'll check into it," said Gabe.

Valdez had reserved a motel room for us in Chama, a town about twenty-five miles away. It was after midnight. He told us to return to Dulce in the morning.

We communed with the darkness. Night out there, on the way into Chama, was blacker than black. The headlights caught the twisted shapes of rocks and gnarled bushes and brought them to life with sharp twitching shadows that seemed to rush out toward the road, swell to gigantic size, and then evaporate as we roared past. We were spooked, excited. The motel Valdez had booked us into was called the "Trail's End."

The next morning we met Valdez at the Jicarilla Tribal Police station to pick up copies of his files. He wore his state police uniform. It was form-fitted, skintight. The shirt had false buttons on the front; it actually closed with a hidden zipper for a seamless, torso-hugging fit. Valdez jingled and clinked as he walked; noise from his gun, belts, clips, D-rings and medals. We would not want to be in the boots of a cattle mutilator caught in the act by Officer Gabe Valdez.

He was busily feeding papers into a photocopier. He shoved a sheaf over to us. In it was a report from the Animal Clinic in Durango, Colorado. The reports had been written in September of 1978, at the request of the La Plata County Sheriff's Office, by a veterinarian named Dr. William Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald had performed a necropsy on a reportedly mutilated animal, a six-month-old Hereford steer. Fitzgerald wrote that the animal appeared to have been recently washed and brushed. This was unusual. "No dirt or mud was present on or between the claws of the hooves, and no blood was present at the puncture or excision sites. No marks of physical restraint were evident," he had written. There was no evidence of a struggle.

The steer's left eye, anus, prepuce, and penis were "cleanly severed with a sharp instrument in a practiced fashion." One-third of the tongue and the lips were also "removed with a sharp cutting instrument." He noted that the tongue was removed with multiple strokes, a sloppier job than the precision cuts on the other parts of the body. There was evidence of local hemorrhaging in the muscles of the neck, and in the back and brisket. Fitzgerald wrote that these were of a size, depth, and shape consistent with damage from needle puncture marks. He found only one-fourth of the expected amount of blood in the carcass. He found a needle puncture wound in the right shoulder. His diagnosis was "Fatal anoxia from near total exsanguination."

Someone, he was saying, had killed this steer by bleeding it dry while it was still alive. No traces of the removed blood had been found near the carcass.

Fitzgerald had even gone so far as to summarize what he believed had been done to the animal:

> Based on examination findings, it is my opinion that the animal was captured and restrained by a chemical agent (injected behind the right elbow), which did not cause him to lie down nor fall. Once under restraint, the following sequence appears evident:
>
> A) The animal was completely washed and dried.
>
> B) Removal of the animal's blood was begun via a 12-14 gauge needle inserted into the left jugular vein.
> In the anaesthetized or heavily sedated animal, the animal's own heart will continue to function and act as a pump until nearly all its blood has been drained.
>
> C) A second veinapuncture was accomplished in the left jugular, and removal of the animal's blood continued until nearly complete. Total exsanguination by this method is not possible.

> D) The eye, prepuce and penis, anus, lips, and tongue were then excised. With the majority of the animal's blood removed, bleeding from these peripheral sites would be almost nonexistent.
>
> E) The animal was then abandoned, still standing, and he moved to the point of discovery under his own power, collapsing and dying from cerebral anoxia.
> (Muscle stores of energy not dependent on available oxygen are present which would allow the animal to move a short distance.)
>
> To accomplish this process I believe would require: A minimum of two individuals; a period of 1-2 hours (primarily for cleaning the animal, as the exsanguination and excision of the organs could be accomplished in 15-20 minutes or less); a capture gun, blowgun, or specially designed arrow; one or more sharp knives and/or scissors; hypodermic needles; and some knowledge of bovine anatomy and treatment procedures (but not in excess of that possessed by many ranchers who have observed and treated their own animals).

"What do you think of that," asked Valdez when we'd finished reading.

It was damned interesting. It certainly seemed to make good sense, and the writer was a veterinarian who knew about animal medicine, working in an official capacity for police authorities. The report did not, however, fit into the balloon/uranium mining/microwave weapon theory. Why would the mutilators wash and dry the steer before killing it? Why would they laboriously drain the blood? And what would they do with it?

Our excitement about cracking the whole mute mystery faded. This added a new dimension; it pointed too clearly toward cults. This might mean that different people were mutilating animals in different states for different reasons: mining or secret military testing in New Mexico, bizarre cult rituals in Colorado. Complicated.

Valdez also gave us a pile of reports from the sheriff's office in Benton County, Arkansas. They were the result of several dozen mutilations there in 1978. Valdez had consulted with the deputy in charge of the investigation. Included with them were official and unofficial reports from two Arkansas veterinarians who had examined mutilated animals there.

He assured us that he would do some further checking into balloons and mineral exploration companies in New Mexico. We started our drive down to Albuquerque to meet with Howard Burgess.

Albuquerque

On the trip back to Albuquerque, we were assailed by images. Bright, colorful roadside billboards boasted giant hot air balloons and extolled the perfection of the New Mexico climate for the sport. Balloons appeared as the logos for a dozen businesses, on the sides of delivery trucks and painted on the signs for diners and retail stores.

The psychic tapes had made reference to towers of some kind, possibly radio or microwave, for communication during the clockwork operations of the cattle mutilators. As we approached Albuquerque, we passed the jutting bulk of Sandia Peak, the single mountain that borders the northern reach of the city. Sandia's crests were bristling with arrays of towers and antennas; for TV broadcasting, radio, microwave telephone transmission. Everywhere we looked, what we saw seemed to hook into some aspect of the mutilations.

Although Howard Burgess was expecting us, his voice did not betray great joy when we telephoned him to let him know we had arrived. He would not invite us to meet him at his home. He would come to our hotel.

We waited for him in the cocktail lounge of the Howard Johnson's, one of those low-lit, Naugahyde, injection-molded rooms where long-legged adolescent barmaids in crotch-high hotpants syncopated back and forth.

Burgess arrived, looking like an average Sun Belt retiree: straw cowboy hat, plaid Western shirt with a string tie. He is in his mid-sixties and appears fit and trim. He smiled politely, but there was no crackle of happiness in the expression. Even without ESP, we could tell that Burgess was sizing us up. We ordered beer all around. Burgess reached into a small zippered portfolio and extracted a thin deck of index cards covered with neat lines of hand-printed notes. As he glanced at them he began talking to us about the basics of science and the scientific method. He lectured for a stretch, then asked a few questions. We answered. He spoke a bit more from his notes.

As soon as we demonstrated we were professionals, Burgess seemed relieved.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I've run into so many people over this cattle mutilation business. They say they're scientific and objective, and then they end up spouting crazy theories and all sorts of unfounded, irrational nonsense. I just wanted to be sure."

"That we weren't a couple of nuts?"

"Well, you could put it that way, I guess," he answered.

Burgess told us that he had retired about seven years ago from Sandia Laboratories. He had been a staff member there, a specialist in the research and development of instrumentation and measurement devices. He was an on-the-spot inventor. If the lab needed some phenomenon measured, Howard or his team would build the appropriate instrument. He had had a hand in developing the instruments that NASA used to measure the radiation from solar flares.

"I've been told that my work helped put our men on the moon several years earlier than expected," he told us.

He had begun his career at Sandia doing research and development on the team that built the first hydrogen bomb. He held a top secret security clearance. He had published many articles in electronics periodicals in the late Forties and early Fifties, and was still writing. He worked with his wife, Lovola, a retired school principal. He had published two articles about cattle mutilations. One appeared in 1977 in *Beyond Reality* Magazine entitled, "Cattle Mutilation: Witchcraft Rituals or Space Invasion?" covering the mutilation of the first Gomez animal in 1976, where the triangular prints had been found. The second, "Close Encounters at the Old Corral," had run in *True UFOs and Outer Space Quarterly* in 1979. Burgess has no college degree, no formal training in science or electronics. He is completely self-educated.

"I'm not out to prove anything," he told us. "But some of the facts of these mutilations can't be ignored. I'm strictly scientific in all my work. It's the only way to get anywhere with something like this."

Burgess was full of anecdotes about the mutilations, rumors, and his own theories. He spoke of his ideas about the condition of the internal organs of the Gomez bull mutilated in April of

1978 and had some ideas about the test results that Schoenfeld Laboratories had come up with on the liver sample, particularly the extremely low level of copper in the tissue. He explained that he had read somewhere that there was a chemical relationship between copper and iron in the metabolism of the blood.

Blood cells carry oxygen to body tissues by binding the oxygen to molecules of hemoglobin. The heart of the hemoglobin molecule is a single iron atom. The iron atom and the oxygen are what give blood its red color.

Burgess had read that if the copper content in the body was affected by some outside influence copper atoms would precipitate out of their chemical bonds, causing iron to be lost from the blood cells, since the two elements were chemically related in blood cell structure. When the iron went, the blood would lose its ability to carry oxygen. It would also turn pale pink and watery, just like the blood that came from the Gomez bull's nostrils. He also said that this loss of copper and then iron would cause the liver to appear pale yellow, like that of the bull.

Burgess said this breakdown could be caused by extremely high doses of microwave radiation. The Gomez bull, and possibly other mutilated animals, he felt, had been killed by such doses of radiation. He also said that these high microwave exposures would kill any bacteria in the animals' carcasses, "freeze them in their tracks," as he put it, so their concentration could be analyzed. He believed this was done purposely. The mutilators could be killing the animals with microwaves and also preserving dead bacteria samples in their tissues by the same means. Test samples containing the target bacteria might be removed for laboratory analysis, and these were the tissues taken in the classic mutilation: tongue, lips, eye, anus, genitals, udder.

He also believed that microwave radiation had been responsible for the abnormally slow decay of mutilated carcasses that had been reported. Just as the radiation would kill bacteria in the sample organs, it would also wipe out all the microbes left in the rest of the carcass. Since these were the bugs responsible for the normally swift decomposition of the carcasses of ruminants like cows, their absence would cause the animals not to bloat or decompose in the normal fashion.

Burgess was implying that the cattle mutilations were a twofold clandestine experiment, being conducted by some group, possibly the U.S government or the military. The two things being tested were microwave weapons and chemical and bacterial warfare (CBW) agents. The cattle were first infected with CBW bacteria, then the microbes were given time to multiply and spread in the animal's body. Later, the mutilators would find the cow (which had been marked for selection with the fluorescent material he and Valdez had found on the Gomez cattle), kill it with the microwave radiation weapon, and mutilate it. The organs taken would be analyzed, to see how completely the CBW agent had penetrated the animal's tissues.

In fact, Burgess said this also explained why predators would not touch the carcasses of mutilated animals. We knew of recent experiments showing that laboratory rats had an unexplainable ability to detect high concentrations of X-rays aimed at them. Tests had shown that this sensitivity was related to their sense of smell. If you destroyed the rats' olfactory nerves, they could no longer detect the radiation. Burgess said predators like coyotes, weasels, and skunks, could "smell" the residue of the microwave used to kill the cattle, and so avoided eating them.

Many other aspects of the mutilations, he continued, supported this theory. He told us that the mutilators removed the eyes from cattle because the eye was an excellent test organ if one were trying to gauge the rate of penetration of a bacterial agent through an animal's tissues. The eye fluid, he said, was the last place in the body that would be penetrated by a slowly growing population of bacteria. It was the last stop for CBW agents. Therefore, he explained, if you compared the concentration of the CBW agent in the eye fluid with concentrations in other tissues, the rectum, the lower intestine, you could tell how long the animal had been carrying the bacteria or virus you had infected it with. If the levels of the agent in the eye were low, while they were high in the other tissues, it meant that the bugs hadn't had time to spread far into other tissues. If the levels in the eye fluid were high, it meant that the animal's tissues had been fully infiltrated by the CBW agent, so the animal had been contaminated for a longer time.

Some of the organs taken in cattle mutilations, Burgess said, were closely tied into the lymphatic system. This is part of the immune system and functions to produce white blood cells to fight infections, as well as to collect concentrations of invading bacteria so the white blood cells can destroy them. Swollen lymph glands in the throat often accompanied a throat or sinus infection for exactly this reason, he reminded us. He explained that by taking the cattle's tongue, lips, and anus and rectum, the mutilators might be able to analyze how the lymph system was handling the invasion of the CBW agents they had induced into the animal.

Burgess said that the mutilated carcasses he had seen had convinced him that the cattle mutilators were using some sophisticated equipment to cut their samples out of the animals. The wounds where the anus and a portion of the lower intestine had been removed, he said, looked as though they had been made not by a knife but by some kind of "coring device" that drove into the animal's flesh and sliced out a perfectly cylindrical chunk of meat with the target organs in it. The thing, he suggested, might be spring-loaded and look like a large coffee can with a razor-sharp edge. It worked like a cookie-cutter. The broken pelvic bones on one of the mutilated Gomez cattle had convinced him of this: the device was so powerful in its entry into the flesh that it smashed bones in its way.

We spoke of Gabe Valdez. We asked Howard what he thought of the glowing tombstone in the Gomez family cemetery. He laughed. It was a short, dry, shallow chuckle, first cousin to his cordial but mirthless smile.

"Gabe said he turned off all the lights in town to see if it was a reflection, and the thing kept on glowing," we said.

"Funny," Howard replied. "He told me that when he turned off the lights the tombstone went out too. He said it was only a reflection."

Why, we wondered, would Gabe tell two different stories about the tombstone?

Burgess had some choice words about Ken Rommel. "I talk to him," he said. "But I don't trust him. I like him, but I don't like what he's up to." Burgess also seemed concerned about Rommel's apparent threats to discredit all the people in New Mexico who had taken the mutilations seriously and attempted to investigate them on their own. If Rommel's threats were real, then Burgess's name would be high on the list of discreditees.

One of Howard's interests were UFOs. He had been researching them since the Fifties, when he had seen one himself in the company of two other witnesses.

"You don't have to believe me," he said, "but there were two other guys with me, and they saw it too."

We asked him if he had any idea what the craft was. "None at all," he replied, "but it sure wasn't flying with any of the aerodynamic principles of any plane I've ever seen."

The experience had forever cemented Howard's interest in UFOs.

He seemed anxious to leave, and we had a flight to Denver in two hours. Again as with Valdez, we all promised to keep in close touch.

7

Colorado

CBI

Carl Whiteside came out to the reception area of the Denver CBI headquarters to meet us. Impeccably dressed in a gray suit, he was the size of a professional football player. His eyes were hooded, intensely blue, and cold. Making eye contact with Mr. Whiteside was like looking at a matched pair of clean, patient, and extremely dangerous cobras.

He led us into his immaculate office. The only thing on his desk was a large crystal ball in a heavy wooden stand.

Whiteside sat and folded his hands, sizing us up as Howard Burgess had.

We told him we were interested in any copies of official records that he could give us.

"I can show you some, but there are a lot I can't," he said.

If the case was closed, then why were some of the records still confidential?

"Do you have any idea how involved this thing was here in Colorado?" he replied. "We approached this thing like a human murder case. We were serious, we wanted to go the whole route: analysis of crime scenes, lab work on evidence, consultation with experts, we even did undercover work. We spent a tremendous amount of time and money and had a lot of manpower committed to it."

It turned out that much of the information in the confidential files contained the names and addresses of people who had come up for scrutiny during the investigation, most of them innocent citizens whose names just happened to fall into the investigation's maw. Some of them were known criminal types who were checked out because their profiles made them prime suspects. Either way, those names had to be kept private, for the sake of personal confidentiality and for the sake of police security. There was another reason why Whiteside couldn't throw all his files open to us.

"There was a lot of politics connected with this mutilation business," he explained. "People accused us of pulling a cover-up. Relations with some of the county sheriffs got—well, I guess you could say a little bit strained."

Whiteside didn't want us to take the names of disgruntled sheriffs from the reports in his files, go back and agitate their angry memories, and possibly raise a whole new storm of problems for him and his agency.

We turned the conversation around to numbers. The CBI had been involved in investigating the mutilations from May of 1975 through December of 1976, although most of their activity had taken place between May, 1975, and December of the same year. During that time there were 206 cattle mutilations reported. Of those, 35 carcasses were sent to the Colorado State University for analysis and 36 were sent to the CBI laboratory. Out of these 71 carcasses, only 50 actually made it into the labs to be analyzed.

"That's twenty-five percent of all the reported mutilations," Whiteside pointed out.

Of the group that was analyzed by the CBI evidence laboratory, only two or three looked as if they might have been cut by sharp instruments, he said. This determination was made by microscopic analysis of the cut ends of hair shafts from the hide bordering the wounds. Irregular, crushed, or mangled hairs are characteristic of tooth damage from predators. Smooth, even severance of the shafts is a basis to conclude that the animals *might have,* and he underlined those two words, been cut with a sharp instrument.

Of the thirty-five carcasses that had gone to the CSU veterinary pathology laboratory, only nineteen had been worth necropsies; the rest were too decomposed to work with. Of those nineteen, eleven had shown signs of mutilation with a sharp instrument. And some of those had shown both the work of a sharp instrument and marks from predators.

"By the way," he noted, "that says something about those stories of how predators won't go near the mutilated animals."

He offered the numbers again, this time in context. Fifty carcasses, one quarter of the total of 206 reported mutilations, had come in for analysis. Of these, eleven had been confirmed to have been cut by sharp instruments.

"That's a little more than five percent of all the reported mutilations that were cut by humans," he said

If the figure was accurate and it applied across the board, then there really was nothing to the mutilations but what the debunkers said: mass hysteria, mistaken predator damage, and a few copycats. No drugs, poisons, laser burns, or odd influences were found in any of the carcasses. This led the CBI to conclude that the animals had died from normal causes and then had been cut by people after death. Whiteside's opinion was that these confirmed mutilations, this tiny percentage, were the work of copycats. You'd expect about a dozen kids or pranksters in a state of several million people to go out and slice up a few dead cows just to mess with the cops.

He did have a point there, but the other face of the argument said that the labs had only seen one quarter of the reported mutes. What, we wondered, would the lab reports have said if they had had the chance to analyze all 206 animals?

Whiteside was beginning to loosen up. He told us more about the shape of the CBI's investigation. He had consulted with the U.S.D.A. Wildlife Research Center, and they had concurred that almost all the reported cases of mutilations fit into the pattern of normal predator damage. He had never encountered any cases in which the carcasses behaved oddly after death, particularly in the rate of their decay. All the cases he had been involved with had bloated and decomposed quickly, as one would expect. None of them had lain on the ground for weeks, unbloated, rotting abnormally slowly or apparently not at all. This did not fit with what Howard Burgess had told us.

Had the CBI given any consideration to the idea that some kind of Satanic or magical cult had been mutilating the cattle to use the parts and blood in their rituals?

"We took that angle very seriously," said Whiteside. "There's a good deal of cult activity down around Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs," he said. "We even did a little undercover work. We had informants, and even infiltrated some of the groups. We found nothing to connect them to the mutilations."

Whiteside didn't want to go into detail about the agency's work with cult groups, again because names had been given by various sources, and some of those were of prominent citizens. The people had been involved in no way whatever, and their privacy had to be protected.

The CBI had also responded seriously to the reports of mystery helicopters sighted in conjunction with the mutilations. They had gotten the flight plans of all the National Guard helicopter training missions out of Fort Carson and mapped their distribution. Nothing on the map corresponded to the mutilation reports. There had been one tantalizing piece of physical evidence though.

On July 7, 1975, a prominent farmer in Lincoln County had found a blue plastic satchel on his property. It was stamped with a government property seal, and was the type of zippered envelope freely issued by the Air Force and Army to personnel all over Colorado. Inside it were a cow's ear, part of a cow's tongue, a government-issue scalpel with a disposable blade, and a pair of arm-length, clear plastic gloves of the type used by ranchers to artificially inseminate cows. The gloves and scalpel were covered with blood and tissue, and looked as if they had been used. This was the kind of physical evidence everyone had been hoping for. Unfortunately, it had led nowhere.

Eventually, the CBI had given up on the case. The wave of mutilation reports had passed by the middle of 1976, the CSU reports had pointed to predator damage in almost all the cases, there had been no informants who had come forward.

"At one point there was about $40,000 in reward money offered," said Whiteside. "We even set up a secret witness program through the *Denver Post*.

"Nothing happened. And that in itself was highly unusual."

Ultimately, the investigation was dropped for lack of evidence.

We politely badgered him for some copies of his files. He finally agreed to let us look through some of his reports. He left the office and returned a few minutes later carrying a huge cardboard file box that measured about four feet long by about two feet deep and wide. He opened it and slid papers across the desk to us.

Riffling through them we saw offense dates, names of complainants, names of the sheriffs who had reported them, descriptions of the carcasses and mutilation sites. We found two reports that noted the presence of marks on the ground near the animals that looked like helicopter skid marks. One report described them as "helicopter-like skid marks," the other stated that they were definitely the marks left by the parallel landing skids of a chopper.

"What about these?" we asked. Whiteside shrugged.

"As far as I'm concerned," Whiteside counseled as we left, "this whole thing was a big non-event. It just got out of hand. Keep that in mind in your investigation. Don't get carried away."

Later, from our hotel room, we telephoned ex-Sheriff Tex Graves in Sterling, Logan County. He was the man who had dealt with the oddest circumstances in Colorado surrounding the dozens of mutilations reported in his county. Logan was buried in mutilation reports all through 1976, long after they had all but stopped in the rest of Colorado. It was Graves who had actually seen the large UFO that had been frequently reported there during that time. It was so commonly sighted that the population had given it a nickname: Big Mama. Graves had also had two very disturbing experiences.

In one instance, a mutilated cow had been found with its mouth full of shredded, aluminum radar chaff, causing speculation about government involvement in the cattle mutilations.

On another occasion, Graves and some deputies, along with a newspaper reporter, had gone out in patrol cars one night to try to trace and identify the unidentified airborne lights, including Big Mama, that had been reported in Logan County. Another deputy was flying a plane, taking radio commands from Graves on the ground.

Graves's patrol encountered an Air Force pickup truck on the road near some underground ICBM silos. There were two Air Force sergeants in the truck, and they offered to aid the sheriff in his search. They said they would alert the radar installation at Warren Air Force Base, 100 miles away in Cheyenne, and have it track any suspicious aircraft for the lawmen. Since the Air Force men had direct radio contact with the radar installation, they said they would relay the contacts to the sheriff and his men. In the words of Bill Jackson, the newspaper reporter who was out with Graves that night:

"For the rest of the night the guys in the pickup were relaying information to us from the radar unit, and we were feeding it to the search plane. We had cars scattered all over hell when all of a sudden someone gave orders to halt the radar unit's cooperation. We ended up in Rock Springs, Wyoming, at 3 A.M."*

**IMPACT/Albuquerque Journal Magazine*, Oct. 25, 1977. Fritz Thompson.

The next morning, Jackson called the operations officer at Warren Air Base for some information about last night's cooperation effort. Jackson almost fell out of his chair at the officer's reply. The officer told him that Warren did not have a radar tracking installation. Whatever information the two Air Force men had been feeding to Graves's patrol was completely fabricated.

We really wanted to talk to Sheriff Graves, or rather ex-Sheriff Graves. In the election after the cattle mutilation wave in Logan, Graves had retired from office and opened a vacuum cleaner business. No one was sure if all the confusion and controversy had broken his spirit as a lawman, or if he had just quit because he was looking for something new. We reached Graves by telephone at his new business.

"I want out of this," he said. "I've been misquoted too many times. People say I've made accusations against the Federal government and the CIA about these mutilations. It's not true. This could get me into a lot of trouble. I've got a family and a new business to take care of. I'm too old for this," he declared. And he hung up the phone.

CSU

The next morning we set out on the sixty-mile drive north to Fort Collins, Colorado, and Dr. Albert McChesney at the Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine pathology laboratory. Sleet covered the roads, and the wide dome of the eastern Colorado sky was lead gray.

We found that McChesney was expecting to spend a good deal of time with us. He had set aside an empty office for the interview to make sure we would not be disturbed. Like Carl Whiteside, he had been hounded by writers, reporters, independent cattle mutilation investigators, TV producers, UFO buffs, and conspiracy theorists since 1975. He had been misquoted and accused of participation in official cover-ups. He was tired, but he knew that if he refused to see anyone, particularly journalists, they might take it as an admission that he was indeed trying to hide something. He folded his long frame into a chair. McChesney had the air of a country doctor, calm, deliberate, and quiet-spoken.

McChesney had been the coordinator for all the pathology work and necropsies done on the mutilated cattle sent to the lab by the CBI and the county sheriffs in 1975 and 1976. He had

supervised the nineteen necropsies Whiteside had told us about, and also four more in 1976. At least one of these was from Tex Graves in Logan County.

McChesney patiently explained that the one crucial factor in investigating cattle deaths like these was establishing the cause of death. Initially, it didn't matter what kind of wounds the carcass bore. One first checked to see if the cow had died from any unusual causes. If you could establish that the animal had been purposely killed, either by gunshot, drugs, trauma, poisoning, or some other means, then you might be able to say that its mutilated state could be connected to its death.

If, however, you could show that the animal died of some natural cause, then you had to assume the cow dropped over on its own with no help from anyone. If such an animal was mutilated with a sharp instrument, then you logically concluded that someone found it after it had died and cut it up.

None of the animals McChesney had seen had died from anything unusual. They had all met their end through hardware, pneumonia, rumen impaction (blocked intestines), and common bacterial infections. They had all been mutilated after death. He had found no suspicious drugs, including tranquilizers, in any of the carcasses. The mutilation damage on more than half of the animals had been the work of predators. Under microscopic magnification, you could see the rough tooth-jagged edges of predators' teeth, even in a wound that had shrunk and assumed a smooth contour to the eye. By the same token, you could also see the smooth strokes made by a blade.

McChesney also explained that the reportedly mutilated animals he had seen were damaged in exactly the same places where predators begin their work on a carcass.

"Why were so many carcasses damaged by normal predation, a common sight to all ranchers, suddenly mistaken for mutilations?" we asked.

"The power of suggestion," McChesney shot back calmly. The press, he explained, had run wild with cattle mutilation stories. Rumors flew like birds through the air of Colorado. There had been a panic mentality in the districts.

"What about the claims that the carcasses had been found drained of blood?"

"That's an easy one," he said, "if you know anything about what happens inside an animal after it dies."

McChesney invited us to think through to the logical conclusion. Investigators at the scene, untrained in pathology, do their work on the accessible topmost part of the carcass. That's where they get their samples. No one wants to roll a stinking, thousand-pound cadaver over to see if the blood pooled near the ground. They slice into the topmost side and find bloodless tissue: so they mistakenly conclude that the whole animal has been drained.

McChesney again stressed that there had been nothing unusual about the carcasses he had seen, aside from the group that had apparent cut marks. "We found nothing that looked like needle marks, and no clamp marks on the legs of any of them."

The doctor had an informative response to Howard Burgess's ideas about microwave radiation being the cause of the pale yellow liver in Manuel Gomez's mutilated bull.

"You've got to understand how the digestive system of a ruminant like a cow works," he said. "They chew their cud, which means they chew their forage, hay, feed, grass, and then swallow it. It undergoes some digestive action in the rumen, the first of their several stomachs. It's regurgitated and chewed again, swallowed, and goes into the other chambers, the omasum, the abomasum and then the intestines, where it's actually digested.

"What happens in the rumen is basically fermentation. These animals are actually big fermentation tanks. Fermentation generates heat, and sets up a fine medium for bacteria to grow in, and the fermentation continues whether or not the animal is living."

This fermentation cycle would mean that a dead cow was loaded with thriving bacteria, which would accelerate the decomposition process. Therefore dead cattle, mutilated or not, should bloat and decay easily. How did McChesney account for the mutilated carcasses that had been described as seemingly "embalmed," refusing to bloat or decompose for days or weeks? Burgess had suggested this was the result of an abnormal lack of bacteria caused by radiation. McChesney added a few other considerations.

"Cattle die from metal poisoning all the time. On mineral-rich land, the metals migrate up into the plants they eat. If a cow gets too high a dose of mercury or arsenic, for instance, it will die from poisoning by those elements. If it kills the cow, the toxic metal will often kill the bacteria, too." Result? Little or no bloat and decay, at least not until new bacteria can infiltrate the carcass from the ground, and maybe not even then.

Dr. McChesney brought up some statistics. "During the flurry of mutilations, the rate of death among cattle did not rise above the expected average for that time of year," he said. If the death rate had increased by even a small margin during the mutilations, it would have meant that there was definitely a new force at work, killing animals in numbers beyond what was expected. Since this had not happened, McChesney had concluded that this was another factor that emphasized that the deaths were probably due to natural causes and nothing else.

We had been with the doctor for more than three hours. He graciously offered us all of his files to study and photocopy at our leisure.

The reports offered a chronology of CSU's pathology work.

A total of eleven of the reports confirmed that the animals had been mutilated with sharp instruments, matching what both Whiteside and McChesney had told us. None of the confirming reports, however, indicated any unusual causes of death.

In his file was a letter McChesney had written on October 27, 1975, declining an invitation to sit on a local panel in Colorado convened to discuss the mutilations. He sent a full summary of his conclusions. In part, they were:

"Some dead cattle . . . contained undeniable evidence of tool-made incisions in the skin for amputation of the genitalia, and in the mouth for amputation of the tongue. In some cases, predators had eaten soft tissues exposed by the amputations. In still other dead cattle skin incisions were made by carnivorous teeth. . . . All incisions appeared to have been made after death of the affected animals."

The letter went on to stress that the laboratory had particularly attempted to establish causes of death for the animals. They had found "no common poisons or drugs," and causes of death of the preserved animals were all common diseases. He summarized his findings as follows:

1. Most affected cattle died from some natural cause, such as malignant edema.

2. Subsequent to death, some carcasses were mutilated and parts were amputated by unknown persons, using sharp tools. Parts of some mutilated carcasses were later ripped out and eaten by predatory animals such as coyotes and dogs.

3. Other dead cattle were attacked directly by the same types of predators. In such cases the anus, perineum, and adjacent soft tissues were excised and eaten. Mutilations by predators, in general, resemble mutilations made by sharp tools.

4. Increased numbers of attacks on dead cattle by predators resulted from expanding numbers of coyotes and other wild predators, and from fewer available sheep throughout the region. Naturally a larger population of predators on pastures and ranges increased the total demand for predator food.

5. We offer no explanations beyond speculations already made and presented in the public media for mutilations made by people.

We finished our Xeroxing, thanked McChesney, and drove cautiously back to Denver.

The Graveyard Shift: Disembodied Voices

That evening the sleet turned into a spring blizzard: big, wet flakes like fluffy Orlon Ping Pong balls began to bury Denver. At midnight we strolled into the darkened hallways and stairwells of KOA radio for our all-night stint on the Tony Larson show.

The graveyard radio shift was not new to either of us. We'd both done it dozens of times before at stations all around the country, but we agreed that the amazing thing is always that there are actually hundreds of thousands of people out there in the darkness listening to you.

Tony Larson is a small, wiry man with a gracious manner and a full, smooth, radio announcer's voice seasoned with the lightest tinge of a drawl. He introduced us and explained to his audience that we were soliciting their help in our research, looking for leads into the cattle mutilation mystery from people who had been touched by it. Next, we explained how our interest in the mystery had been sparked by the call to the Larson show from Tennessee five months earlier.

From the moment the first call was taken, the switchboard lights burned until the wrap-up at five-thirty the next morning. We received about fifty calls from almost a dozen states, about ten an hour.

The calls reported: mutilated cattle; silent black helicopters; shattering radio and TV interference; suspicions of Army involvement; a Biblical solution suggesting cows and bulls as sex symbols for the human race; extraterrestrials leaving carcasses as calling cards; silent nocturnal lights; a glowing UFO inside a cloud; Biblical opinion that UFOs were piloted by fallen angels, followers of Satan; another Biblical solution refuting this theory because all fallen angels are now in chains; eight-foot-tall, armless creatures zooming around in the mountains wearing flying suits; an apelike creature resembling Bigfoot; UFO involvement in the eruption of Mt. St. Helens—and much more.

When we left the time capsule of the studio, the dawn city was under several inches of snow. We picked our way back to the hotel. We had asked that no one call us before 11:00 A.M., so we could get some sleep.

The phone began to ring at about 6:00 A.M. It did not stop until we shut the hotel room door behind us at noon.

II. DRAFTING NEW CHARTS

> *"If you don't know where you are going,*
> *any road will take you there."*
> *Henry Kissinger, from his*
> *speech at the 1980 Republican*
> *National Convention.*

1

Experimental Maps

Winding Down, Gearing Up

The trip showed how immense the public and official responses to the mute phenomenon were. We could now see Senator Schmitt's 1979 Albuquerque conference in its proper context. It was not an isolated event, but rather the natural culmination of official involvement in the mutilations mystery that had been building up since 1974.

Dr. Fitzgerald's veterinary report on the 1978 La Plata County, Colorado, mutilated calf confirmed that there were indeed trained professional veterinarians who also agreed that at least some of the deaths and mutilations were not natural, but were willful and committed by someone with a motive.

We weren't quite sure what to make of Howard Burgess. Newspaper and magazine articles described him as a "retired scientist." In fact he was not a "retired scientist," but a retired designer of instrumentation, a self-taught electronics whiz with no formal training. Still, he seemed to be concerned with taking a scientific approach to the cattle mutilations. His ideas about microwaves and bacteria were fascinating, but we did not know yet if they were reasonable in the context of biology. Burgess was also a long-time UFO buff.

Dr. McChesney and his reports had confirmed that there actually were cattle mutilations, at least after a fashion. There were a few ways to react to CSU's findings on those nine confirmed cases of cattle cut with sharp instruments after they had died from natural causes. They might have been exactly what the doctor and Carl Whiteside said they were: the work of copycats, prompted by press coverage.

Or it might be that the mutilators had been so clever that they had successfully disguised the way they killed the animals as natural causes, and McChesney consequently had been manipulated into calling the cases the work of thrill-seekers on already dead cows. A third interpretation was that McChesney, or CSU, or the CBI, or all of them, were lying outright, and that they were all part of a gigantic cover-up to keep the real cause of the cattle mutilations a secret.

All these issues were obviously far from resolved.

Our busy phone session on the Tony Larson Show had shown us that ranchers, lawmen, and citizens all over the Midwest and the West were passionately concerned about the mystery, that there were mutilation fans and aficionados all over, from obviously crankish paranoids to people whose friends or families had lost animals this way, to UFO buffs trying to make a connection. Then, too, many of the callers had seemed to equate cattle mutilations and flying saucers: so many of them had phoned in to speak exclusively about UFO sightings, and not about mutilations at all. They were both the same to many people, unexplained phenomena of the same ilk.

The stream of phone calls had also carried a muscular undercurrent of suspicion of the government. Many of the listeners would have found it easy to believe that the Army, Air Force, CIA, or the feds were behind it.

About a week after we returned we began outlining a series of scenarios for the cattle mutilations, based on all the theories being used to explain them. The method was a minor variation on the old, tried and true police technique of "motive, method, opportunity" analysis.

The key ingredient in each scenario was the motive it required. For example, in the scenario attributing the mutilations solely to natural predators, the motive would be food. In the scenario dealing with chemical warfare, the motive would be surreptitious and illegal testing of CBW agents, etc.

The scenarios fell into three classes: those that outlined the mutilations as a result of natural phenomena, like predators eating cattle which had died from natural causes; those that involved the work of human beings, including cult sacrifice, pranks and hoaxes, and a collection of conspiracies; and those scenarios that required the operation of extra-normal or parapsychological forces such as alien beings in UFOs, psychological projections, and the like.

We pinned them all up on the wall, group by group, sub-group by sub-group, and spent hours and hours talking and theorizing. Some seemed definitely plausible; others made us uncomfortable; others we couldn't seem to buy at all.

But at last we felt we were finally ready to move into the next phase of our work. Scouring libraries and tracking down experts, we began to gather information by which we could actually test the scenarios. We also began planning a month-long trip across the country to interview pivotal people in the mutilation mystery. And we spent a good deal of time on the telephone with members of the mutologist's network, educating ourselves about the people who made mutology a major pursuit in their lives.

2

The Rommel Conference

The mute network began to hum with anticipation in the weeks before ex-FBI agent Ken Rommel's press conference in April, 1980. The mutologists in particular couldn't wait to know the results of his year-long L.E.A.A.-funded investigation.

On April 13, the *Albuquerque Journal* ran a long feature article about the end of Rommel's investigation. It declared that Rommel intended to conclude in his report that not only the mutilations he had investigated in New Mexico, but probably all reported cattle mutilations, were actually normal predator damage. The article predicted that loud cries of protest to this conclusion would be heard in New Mexico and around the country.

Rommel had made it clear to the reporter that he did not

accept "any of the UFO, cult, or government research theories" about the mutilations. When asked about the apparently unexplainable circumstances surrounding many of the mutilations, Rommel answered, "Will I be able to handle all the facts? Maybe not. Maybe I'm not going to accept all the facts. Many times the facts you are dealing with are not facts." Elsewhere he was quoted as saying, "There are a lot of people who like to believe in the bizarre and unusual. I've had people come up to me and say they sure hope I find some little green men, because that's what they want."*

Gabe Valdez was quoted in the article as saying that none of the cases Rommel had examined had been actual mutilations, but that if only Rommel could see one real classic mutilation, he would forgo his conclusions. Rommel retorted that the complete lack of classic mutilations in his investigation meant that the ones reported in prior years, including the ones investigated by Valdez, had not been mutilations either, but misinterpreted predator damage.

"I think," said Rommel, "it's very unusual that mine are the only ones that aren't mutilations. I think a point can be made." Whatever that point might be, it was obvious that it would not be palatable to Gabe Valdez or Howard Burgess.

Senator Harrison Schmitt was quoted in the piece as saying that he found Rommel's implications hard to accept, based on what he had been told. He was under the impression that the use of tranquilizers had been firmly established in the mutilations. The senator said that if he was unsatisfied with Rommel's report, he would push for further investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice.

On April 16, 1980, in the Governor's Conference Room of the State Capitol in Santa Fe, Rommel held his conference. Dave DeWitt, a novelist from Albuquerque, was there. He called us the next day and said Rommel's presentation had been spectacular. DeWitt had been very interested in the mutilations and had done some excellent research into the feasibility of some of the theories about them. He felt that there was more to the mutilations than predator damage.

"That is," he told us, "until I heard Rommel. I'm still skeptical, but Rommel really shook me. He made some damned good points and supported them well. If I didn't know some of the things I do, I'd have come away convinced that there was absolutely nothing to any other explanation for the mutes." DeWitt sent us an audio tape he had made of the conference. When it arrived, we eagerly slapped it into our miniature Sony and strained to hear through the static and ambient noise.

**Albuquerque Journal*, April 13, 1980.

Rommel had been introduced by District Attorney Eloy Martinez. Martinez stressed that the results of the investigation were the sole responsibility of his office, and he reminded the audience that Rommel had been an investigator for the FBI for over twenty years.

Rommel opened by saying that it was not his intention to "embarrass, criticize, or question the sincerity of anyone in regards to this investigation. I fully realize that there are those, including law enforcement officers, that may have different opinions from mine and who will take exception to my findings." He also addressed the members of the press present, telling them that he hoped that by the end of the conference they might feel that he had helped them to avoid "being used" by anyone in the future with regard to cattle mutilations.

Rommel then delivered a description of the classic mutilations reported in so many states. He included the carcasses found devoid of blood, the lack of evidence at the sites, and the sightings of UFOs and mystery helicopters in conjunction with the incidents, as well as references to animals reported with broken legs. He broadly covered the theories that had been advanced to explain them, including UFOs, mineral exploration, and secret government activity. The goal of his investigation, he explained, was to "determine if a problem really existed, and if so, was it a law enforcement problem."

"I do not believe that a professional approach to an investigation is well conducted through the media," he said. He had not spoken freely to the press while he was working on the report, he explained, to avoid endangering the possibility of prosecution of the culprits, if it turned out there were any. He also wanted to avoid making misleading statements out of context.

"I also wanted to see if the media itself was part of the problem," he continued. "I felt the only way to find this out was to see how the media covered any incidents that I investigated, without the benefit of my knowledge." We were impressed: he had used a kind of experimental double-blind approach.

Rommel had investigated twenty-four mutilations reported in New Mexico between May of 1979 and April of 1980, and he had hooked up with police agencies in several other states which had conducted extensive investigations of their own. He had their files. Without missing a beat even for dramatic emphasis, he said:

"I am of the opinion that all of the mutilations investigated by me were caused by and totally consistent with what one would expect to find from normal predation, scavenger activity, and decomposition of a dead animal. Further, based on my investigation I am of the opinion that, with very few exceptions, a good many of the other reported mutilations fall into this category. I have not found one credible source that differs with this opinion, nor has one piece of hard evidence been presented to me that would cause me to alter this opinion." And he didn't stop there.

"In regards to the cases that I have not had the opportunity to investigate, I base this opinion on the following: I have found a great deal of very creative writing. I have found statements and opinions totally unsupported by facts. I have found errors in official reports. These errors include both errors of commission and errors of omission, both of which were of such a material nature as to create an entirely different picture than that which existed."

Was he referring to Gabe Valdez's reports? we wondered.

Rommel pointed out that in the few instances where diagnostic laboratories had identified knife cuts, all had been made after death. This was the same as McChesney's position at CSU.

He went on to speak of the principle of "authoritative dismissal" of bothersome statements, as it is used in politics. If someone says something that threatens your position, shrug it off with an authoritative tone. "Everybody knows that—," or "It's common knowledge that—." He applied this to articles written about the mutilations that had said things like "serious investigators have long since dismissed the predator theory." "And then," said Rommel, "they are off and running with the more bizarre." He had, he said, been unable to ascertain how any of these so-called serious investigators had disposed of the predator theory as an explanation.

He spoke of the use of the words "surgical precision" to describe wounds on mutilated animals. He had asked a well-respected Santa Fe surgeon how the doctor would define the term.

"Well," the doctor had replied, "it means that I try to cut in a straight line."

He spoke of how wounds from predator damage could shrink and contract until they looked like knife cuts, he made McChesney's parallel between the parts taken in a mutilation and those usually chewed off first by predators, and he explained the bloodlessness as pooling in the lower tissues after death. Untrained observers, he said, mistook this for an animal drained of blood.

"During the course of this investigation, one of the individuals I interviewed supplied me with a written report prepared by a veterinarian in another state, based on a necropsy that he had performed on an animal, and the observations he made following this necropsy." After reading the report, Rommel felt that the veterinarian's observations were not supported by the details revealed in the necropsy.

"The report was a beaut," said Rommel. "It had the draining out of the [animal's] blood, the polished hooves and things like that, as if the animal had been set up for a ritual, and the whole ball of wax."

Of course, he was referring to the report written by Dr. William Fitzgerald in Durango, Colorado. And there was no question that the "individual" who had supplied him with it was State Police Officer Gabe Valdez of Dulce.

Rommel had taken the report to three veterinarians in Albuquerque. Two of them were board-certified pathologists. He announced that all three said that "the observations in the report were not supported by the facts revealed in the necropsy." All three agreed that many other and more logical conclusions could have been drawn from the same set of facts, and that if the individual who wrote the report "was even a vet, he had to be very new in the field, because the report was written more like what a student would have produced than what they would have expected from a professional veterinarian."

Rommel then sent the report to three additional veterinary diagnostic centers in different parts of the country. One did not respond, but the other two sent back criticisms which "totally tore the report apart."

Rommel then checked on Dr. Fitzgerald and found that the veterinarian had been practicing for only five months at the time he wrote the report in 1978, proving that his consulting vet pathologists had been correct about Fitzgerald's lack of experience. Rommel sent Dr. Firzgerald a copy of the report and asked him if in fact he had written it. Fitzgerald wrote back and confirmed that it was his work, but declined to comment on it because it had been done under the auspices of an official police investigation. The doctor also wrote a letter to District Attorney Eloy Martinez saying that Rommel's letter was "the most obnoxious letter he had ever received." Rommel and Martinez then wrote back, again requesting the veterinarian's cooperation.

"We have not heard from him since," said Rommel.

Addressing the reports that no evidence is found at the scene of cattle mutilations, Rommel stated that it was "readily apparent" that those looking over the mutilated carcasses simply did not consider the presence of bird defecation as evidence. Our research had already shown that in questionable cases of cattle death, bird droppings are usually taken as proof that avian scavengers have been at work on a carcass.

"Experts in the field," said Rommel, "have told me that vultures, ravens, magpies, crows, and eagles all have the ability to [duplicate the damage in the classic mutilation], and this is their normal course of action. Eagles, vultures, and ravens all have the ability to core the anus and to punch through a carcass and remove the inner organs."

He then moved on to field the UFO connection. He spoke of the Taos UFO report from 1978, in which the strange flakes had been dropped on the pickup truck from a hovering orange object and, without mentioning their names, noted Valdez's and Burgess's discovery of fluorescent marks on Manuel Gomez's cows. He explained how the news media had reported that tests had shown that the composition of the UFO flakes and the fluorescent markings were identical.

"One headline even stated that a link between cattle mutilations and UFOs had been made," he said.

Then he called attention to the fact that despite the UFO sighting in Taos, no cattle mutilation had been reported there at that time. "It was further observed," he said, "that no cattle mutilation was reported in Dulce at that time. It was further observed that it is reasonable to believe that none of the supposedly marked cattle have been mutilated, because it is my observation that had this happened, the media would have been the first to know about it."

Rommel revealed that he had spoken with the scientist in Albuquerque "who reportedly compared these two substances," (obviously Dr. Schoenfeld of Schoenfeld Laboratories) and he "advised me that he did in fact *not* compare them, however that he had seen them both, and that they were *not* identical, and that although they had many of the same properties, they were two distinct items."

It was clear that Rommel was surely making no friends among the press, and would definitely never be invited to dinner by either Gabe Valdez or Howard Burgess: he was saying that their work on the Dulce cattle mutilations was worthless, and that they simply didn't know what they were talking about.

"It is interesting how some people can take a set of facts," Rommel said, "in which *no* mutilations are reported, in [which in] two different areas of the state involved two separate items are found, and yet a link between UFOs and cattle mutilations is made. This," he offered, "would be like me standing up here comparing two items to you, indicating that they both have certain properties, i.e., iron, steel, rubber and so on, and that they both had a specific gravity which allowed them to float, and therefore were similar, leaving out the very important fact that one was a Volkswagen Beetle and the other a battleship."

Rommel suggested that many of the other UFO/cattle mutilation associations were just as vague, and then thanked Howard Burgess for furnishing him with some of the mysterious UFO flakes for analysis by the FBI laboratory.

"The FBI laboratory had identified the mysterious flakes as white enamel paint," he said, "typical of acrylic latex emulsion, the kind you smear on your house."

Regarding the reports that mutilated animals had been found dead with their horns driven into the ground, indicating that the animals had been dropped from the air, he said, "There are no rules governing how an animal must die, or in what position. Some die quietly and others, depending on the cause of death, may have violent death throes." These death struggles, he continued, are usually associated with many of the poisonous plants available to livestock.

"New Mexico has over one hundred of them," he noted.

Rommel then tackled the reports of clamp marks on mutilated animals, and suspicious bruises indicating that they had been lifted into the air and dropped.

"I have not seen any of the marks," he said, "nor have I seen photographs of those marks."

By way of analogy, he related his experiences while attending a seminar in Texas the previous year. The chief forensic pathologist for the state of Texas had given a presentation in which he showed a progression of slides that followed the changes in a human corpse, dead by natural causes, during the first several hours after death. After a few hours, a noticeable ring had appeared around the neck of the corpse. The pathologist pointed out that if an untrained investigator or physician had arrived on the scene at this point, he would have mistakenly concluded that the person had died from strangulation and misclassified the death as a homicide. Later slides showed the body covered by distinct areas of obvious discoloration. The pathologist noted that this normal change would probably be interpreted by inadequately trained people as the results of death by beating, because the discoloration strongly resembled bruise marks.

Rommel continued, following police logic by citing the complete lack of informants for the substantial reward money offered by other states in the past as a solid indication that no cults were involved in the mutilations.

Addressing what he called the "secret governmental theory," Rommel said that there was not one shred of evidence to support it.

"The strongest support for this theory is the statement, quote 'Anything this big and this sophisticated has to be done by the government.' I personally believe that in this day and age the government could not keep secret, over such an extended period of time, a project that involved the killing and mutilations of animals on such a grand scale."

Rommel then showed a series of slides he had taken of reportedly mutilated cattle that had been reported to him during his investigation. In every case but one, Rommel said he was able to determine that the animals, reported as mysteriously mutilated in the classic fashion, had died of natural causes and then been torn apart by predators.

Before he switched on the projector, he mentioned that many people had claimed that yes, all the animals he had seen were the result of predator damage, and that he had in fact seen no real mutilations at all. Rommel countered this by noting that all these animals had been *reported* as mutilations, just like the ones in 1976 and 1978. Their numbers, he noted, matched almost exactly the numbers of mutilations reported in those preceding years, and the only difference between the earlier mutilations, the "classic" incidents investigated by Burgess and Valdez, and the ones he investigated was that there had been no one like himself there to scrutinize them and discover that they were not mutilations at all but mistakenly reported, predator-damaged carcasses.

"My mutilations, like all the rest, can be attributed to the greatest phenomenon of all, Mother Nature, acting in her role as the world's greatest ecologist," he said. "However, I believe that if this project had not been initiated, New Mexico would have had at least twenty-three more 'classic mutilations' of the mysterious phenomenon."

We looked at photo prints from the slides. They were awfully convincing. First, they showed a "before and after" series of the carcasses of animals that had died from natural causes. Case after case had been reported by concerned ranchers as surgical mutilations, but close-up slide after close-up slide made it painfully clear that these same animals had actually been ripped apart with beak, tooth, and claw. The jaggedness of the wounds at close range was as plain as the nose on a coyote.

He then launched into the most interesting part of his presentation by recounting the circumstances surrounding what he called a "classic" case, "not because the mutilation was classic, but because of the way the incident had been handled in the press."

The article he was referring to had run in a local northern New Mexico newspaper and had been written by a reporter who had extensively covered the cattle mutilations in New Mexico in 1978. Rommel did not mention the name of the reporter or the paper. Its headline had read "They Held a Mutilation But No One Came."

"The 'No One Came,'" said Rommel, "was referring to me, because they had made the mistaken judgment that I had not investigated this case, and therefore, as far as I'm concerned, they had an open field day for creative writing.

"The story that accompanied this incident was a classic," he explained, "the mutilation was not. The story had everything in it that you could possibly want. It described the incident as a classic mutilation," and, quoting, he read:

"'The dogs ran to the fence and turned back. The tongue was sliced at the root, precisely.' They even had orange lights over the Truchas cemetery. 'The rectal area, the udder, and the ears were removed with surgical precision.'" The sarcasm radiated from Rommel's words like red heat from an iron foundry ingot. He continued quoting. "'The district attorney and the state police are working together to cover up,' and 'it was found within five hours of the kill.' Let's review some of those," he suggested.

"First of all, it was classified as a 'classic,'" he said. "The dogs ran to the fence and turned back. This gives us the mysterious carcass theory. The tongue was sliced at the root precisely—the surgical precision theory. The orange lights over the Truchas cemetery—here's the UFO theory. This is all in *one* article! The udder, the ears, and the rectal area were removed with surgical precision—again, the sophisticated surgeon theory. The district attorney and the state police are working together to cover up—the government conspiracy theory. And the carcass was found within five hours—a remarkable observation in itself, when forensic pathologists who are trained in the field have difficulty telling exactly when a human being died. But the five-hour time frame had to be put in because this coincided with the orange lights over the cemetery."

Rommel was really cooking, and he was only beginning.

"We have a follow-up article, one week later, while they were still under the impression that the incident had not been investigated," he said. Rommel said the second article confirmed the animal as a mutilation and noted that three serious investigators had verified it as a classic.

"Two of those investigators were two of the most well known in the state, and two of the most vocal," Rommel said. "One of these investigators was quoted as saying 'The photograph of the broken leg convinced me,' and then the article goes on to say that the photographs were 'clear and explicit.' And here is the clincher," he continued, still quoting, "'A number of mutilations have had leg breaks like the one in the picture of the Truchas cow. This clue indicates to many investigators that the cows are clamped by the leg and transported from the site of their deaths to the site where they are found.'"

Rommel paused and took a breath audible even on the scratchy tape we had. Hell, we were holding our breaths as we listened, crouched over the tape machine; we had a feeling where he was heading.

"There are some *problems* here," he boomed. "There were *no* broken legs. There were no *photographs* of any broken legs. That makes me question all the previous statements made by these individuals, and also the previous articles produced by this same writer." Rommel still had not mentioned any names, but we knew them all anyway.

We had received copies of the two articles Rommel was referring to at the same time we got the tape. We had read them as we listened, and his quotes were perfectly accurate. The two investigators who had confirmed the animal's mutilation and its broken leg from a photo were State Police Officer Gabe Valdez and retired instrument designer Howard Burgess. The articles had appeared in the *Rio Grande Sun*, published in Espanola, New Mexico. The reporter was a woman named Gail Olson, who had covered many cattle mutilations in New Mexico in 1978, and had spotlighted the work done by Valdez and Burgess.

As we listened, Rommel explained that he had, in fact, investigated that reported Truchas mutilation. He had arrived in the afternoon, not long after someone had told Gail Olson that no investigators had responded to the call. Rommel then produced several slides he had taken of the animal.

Click. "Here is the ear that was surgically removed," he said. The ear was still attached to the cow's head. *Click*. "Here is the rear end that was surgically removed." The hole was ragged and uneven, obvious even in the photo. "It's interesting to note," he added, "that we have eyewitnesses that saw dogs eating from this rear end."

Click. "Here's the udder that was surgically removed." Like the rear end wound, it was ragged, uneven, and obviously torn. *Click*. "Here's the carcass three days later." The rear end wound was twice its original size, torn unevenly up past the cow's hip.

"The 'surgeons' have returned to the rear end, which kills the theory about how predators won't go near the carcasses," Rommel said.

Click. "Here now, the ear has been removed 'surgically,' that's three days later." The ear had been roughly torn off, leaving shreds behind it. *Click*. "Here's the entire animal, three days later. That's the one picture we do have of his legs, and you can see that none of the legs are broken." *Click*. "The next one shows how the surgeons really returned, and performed their final job of surgical removal. This is twenty days later." The audience laughed.

The photograph showed a scattered litter of clean-picked cow bones lying across the ground. They had clearly been eaten bare by predators and scavengers.

It was obvious from the photographs that the animal had been progressively torn to pieces by predators. Yet not only Gail Olson, for the *Sun*, had emphatically classified it as a mutilation, Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess had helped by confirming the judgment.

"A few weeks later," Rommel said, and we could hear the satisfaction in his voice, "the information started to slip out that I had actually investigated this case. It happened because the owner of the animal was so disgusted at the coverage given this incident that she went down to the newspaper and complained, told 'em that I had, in fact, investigated, that she had taken me to the scene herself.

"One of these serious investigators then called me and said he had been misquoted, and that he really didn't confirm this mutilation. He said he had argued with the author. I interviewed the other investigator a few months ago, and he too told me he had been misquoted. The author advised me later that the quotes in the article were correct.

"I wonder," he mused, "if this confusion was the result of the word being out that I had in fact investigated?" Rommel asked.

He then explained that when he investigated the Truchas case, he had found a trail of extreme diarrhea from the animal leading back about a hundred yards to a pasture. "Three poisonous plants had been readily identified in that pasture: larkspur, lupine, and oak brush. And we had an eyewitness that saw dogs doing the damage to the carcass."

We stopped the cassette and caught our breath. We had to start asking ourselves some serious questions about the reliability of Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess as observers, witnesses, and experts on mutilated cattle, as well as that of the press reportage itself.

He finally finished his slide show. "Many people have asked me, How can animals do this kind of damage so precisely?" He then read from a reptile study published in 1975 in *National Geographic*, entitled "Snake Pits of Manitoba." The writer had been watching the snakes emerge from hibernation and was trying to figure out why some of them had been mutilated.

"A flapping of wings and raucous cawing heralded the arrival of a crow. The crow hopped up to a newly emerged snake and grabbed it with one foot, and expertly pecked at the snake four or five times, ate something, then moved to another victim. I jumped up with a yell and the crow flew off, its feathers bristling. I picked up the snake. The skin had been broken only in the area of the liver, and that organ had been neatly excised. Nothing else had been touched. How the crow performed the surgery with such precision is a mystery."

In closing, he mentioned an anthropological survey in progress to determine if any mutilations could be correlated to the high incidence of superstitious beliefs among residents in those places.

Rommel had done an excellent job of presenting his case. A twenty-year vet of the FBI, he also covered his ass like a pro, never mentioning any names. No one could sue him for libel.

The next day, his conference pulled two banner headlines on the front page of the *Rio Grande Sun*, "Mother Nature, Press, Culprits in Area's Cattle Mutilations," and "Dulce Challenges Report, Rommel Qualifications," both by Gail Olson.

The first piece gave a fairly straightforward reading of what Rommel had said. Olson emphasized that Rommel had accused the press of spreading bogus mutilation phenomenon through "creative writing." He was quoted as saying that when the report was due in June he would recommend that not one more penny of taxpayers' money be spent on looking into cattle mutilations. In the future, said Rommel, the press should interview those with mutilation news with polygraph equipment.

The second article described how the residents of Rio Arriba County were dissatisfied with Rommel's conference. Gabe Valdez and Edmond Gomez agreed that "The only way we'll convince the people of what's going on is to shoot that aircraft down." They were referring to the orange UFO they had both seen over Dulce. Two livestock inspectors agreed with Valdez that Rommel had probably not seen any real mutilations. They said the mutes they had seen were definitely not caused by animals. One of them observed that Rommel "doesn't know which end of a cow to put the hay in." The other wished that the D.A.'s office could have at least hired an investigator who knew something about cattle.

Most Rio Arriba residents, Olson reported, felt that Rommel had ignored them in his investigation. Manuel and Edmond Gomez also felt that Rommel had made them out to be fools who didn't know the difference between varmint damage and surgery.

On its editorial page, the *Sun* ran a cartoon of two little green men in flying saucers speaking to each other in gibberish symbols representing extraterrestrial language. The translation beneath the cartoon read: "We've got them fooled! The investigator will announce that cattle mutilations were due to natural causes."

The *Albuquerque Journal* was deluged by letters to its "People's Column" for weeks. Most were critical, some from ranchers insisting that their animals had not been torn apart by predators.

Rommel's conference even made the *New York Times*.

On April 20, 1980, the *Albuquerque Journal* ran an editorial entitled "How Media Critics Err." It boldly compared Ken Rommel's statements with Richard Nixon's tactic of smearing an unfriendly press.

We figured that Rommel must have known the consequences of accusing the press of fabricating rumors. Of course, he was referring only to Gail Olson's articles in the *Rio Grande Sun*, but his indictment had been couched in a general mode. The *Journal*'s editorial ended by pointing out that media critics like Nixon and Rommel "err grievously in their blanket judgments of the whole newsgathering profession for the errors and misdeeds—or for that matter, the singular achievements—of a few isolated newsmen or newsgathering organizations." That could have meant that maybe the *Rio Grande Sun* had erred, but not the *Journal*.

Rommel wrote back to the *Journal* immediately, denying that he had made a blanket attack on the media at his conference, but accusing several local politicians of jumping on the cattle mutilation bandwagon around election time for press coverage. And he thanked them for including him in the same editorial with Nixon.

Even though its conclusions had been expected, Rommel's conference hit the mutilation investigators' network with a head-snapping clang. On April 30, 1980, we spoke with Howard Burgess.

"Rommel is vicious and ruthless," Burgess declared. "He tears people down. He said my work was worthless, that I had no credibility."

Why did he think Rommel had gone to these lengths?

"He's either mentally ill or he was given the word to cover it up, even if he has to embarrass himself," Burgess said. "He's working closely with Dr. Peterson and Dr. Prine of Los Alamos Labs in the cover-up."

Besides, Burgess told us, there had been a real mutilation reported just a few weeks before, south of Albuquerque. "It was a classic, and the rectal wound had been sewn shut,'' he said, with a self-satisfied chuckle.

He told us a writer from *Life* Magazine had been out to interview him. We knew that *Life* had bought Don McCoy's photographs of the Dulce mutilations and was considering running a story about them. Burgess had been highly suspicious of the writer.

''The guy seemed peculiar,'' Howard observed. ''He wasn't interested in the prime facts. He wanted to know things like why Gabe had asked me to make radiation readings on the Gomez animals, and why I had a Geiger counter. He wasn't interested in seeing any pictures and he wasn't interested in Rommel.''

What did Howard really think?

''Well,'' he said, ''he told me he lives out West, here in New Mexico. I doubt it. He was wearing these spotless Western clothes. They didn't look right. He looked like some kind of Washington, D.C., agency type to me. And I heard that his wife works at Los Alamos Labs.''

Burgess was smelling some kind of government surveillance disguised as a *Life* article interview. At this point we frankly weren't sure if he was simply paranoid or on to something.

Everyone who disagreed with Rommel's announced findings was looking to Senator Jack Schmitt for indication.

Bill Donohoe, a press aide at Schmitt's Albuquerque office, told us only that ''the senator feels there was more substance to the issue than Rommel used in his report. It didn't go the way we had hoped it would.'' The prime complaint was that the senator felt that Rommel had not conducted an unbiased, open-minded investigation. He reportedly sensed that Rommel had prejudged the outcome beforehand, ignoring any leading evidence to the contrary. The senator would make no further comments until he read all of Rommel's written report, due out in late June.

Rommel's gleeful insinuations about the ineptness of Howard Burgess and Gabe Valdez showed us that when we stepped into the ring with pros like this ex-FBI man, simple police reports and veterinary findings would not be sufficient mortar to anchor the blocks of any position that faced away from the predator explanation. Newspaper articles would not do either, nor would fascinating theories, even if they floated on the surface of inarguable circumstantial evidence.

We needed to locate hard physical evidence, or official reports about such findings. Any conclusions about the condition of an animal's post-mortem state would have to be upheld not by the word of a veterinarian, but by a qualified veterinary pathologist. If Rommel had done a seamless job of debunking the mutilation phenomenon, we would use his report as a crowbar and pry out enough information to verify his findings ourselves and support his position, if we could eliminate our own doubts.

His status as an ex-government agent, however, a professional spook of sorts, still fed the itch of suspicion about a cover-up, and we were still leaning in that direction ourselves. If Rommel's reports appeared to be questionable, we would have to produce the kind of forensic and police evidence that would stand up in a court of law in order to effectively discredit it.

He had damaged the credibility of Burgess and Valdez, who we still believed to be sincere, particularly Valdez. But Rommel had merely drawn attention to their inconsistencies and their tendency to allow the press to manipulate their ideas. We continued to trust them to an extent, but began to pay closer attention to details of accounts like theirs. It was possible that men who could speak to the press so freely as to open themselves to the kind of ridicule that Rommel had showered on them might be equally careless in some of their other work.

3

Mute Summer

Rommel's conference, and the tension of awaiting his final written report, had set up a twanging resonance all across the wires of the mutilation investigators' network. A few weeks after the conference, Tom Adams at Project Stigma told us he had heard that Rommel would never release the written report, that he had contrived to deny copies of it to people like himself, Burgess and other mutologists, that only twenty copies could be printed, and distribution would be on a first-come, first-served basis only to the press. He also told us that Los Alamos Laboratories had recently admitted to Gail Olson of the *Rio Grande Sun* that they had a file on the mutilations in New Mexico.

Adams had recently gotten word of a few cattle mutilations in Kansas during January and February of 1980. Typically, he offered no personal opinions about Rommel, his motives, or the effect of his investigation. He also mentioned that the documentary film made by Linda Howe at KMGH-TV in Denver was due to air on May 25.

"She's gone for the UFO link," Tom said. "She's supported it with a hypnotic regression done by Dr. Leo Sprinkle on a woman who claims to have been taken aboard a UFO, where she witnessed a calf being mutilated." Leo Sprinkle was a Ph.D. psychologist at the University of Wyoming who specialized in hypnotic regressions of this sort and was held in high esteem by the entire UFO subculture.

Added to the tension of awaiting the Rommel Report was the time of year. It was spring, the moment when all past major cattle mutilation waves had begun. There had not been one of any size in the United States since 1975 and 1976 in Colorado and Montana. There had not been one of any consequence since New Mexico's ninety reports in 1978, and a score or so in Arkansas in 1978 and 1979. Adams, along with Peter Jordan and Burgess, was poised in anticipation, waiting to see where the next one would land.

There had been a small mute wave in Alberta Province in Canada in 1979, somewhere between thirty-five and sixty reports. It was covered the same way the press had in the United States, stressing their mysteriousness and speculating about UFOs and conspiracies. The news coverage also said that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were fairly sure that the legitimate mutilations were the work of magical blood cults operating out of the Calgary area in the province of Alberta. Camps of opinion were forming. Some said UFOs, the police said cults. Veterinarians agreed with the RCMP. There was less intensity in the Canadian accounts, even in those which obviously tried to add some sensationalism to the facts.

The general opinion among the members of the mutologists' network was that whoever was behind the mutilations had intentionally moved them to Canada last year. The mutologists were waiting to see if the mysteriously dead cows would appear there in 1980 or cross back south to the U.S.

Around the second week of May, Peter Jordan called to tell us that there had been a single cattle mutilation in Iowa, and that agent Joe Motsinger of the Iowa Department of Criminal Investigation had confirmed it. The carcass, he said, had been sent to a veterinary pathologist in Ames, Iowa, for analysis. Motsinger, he said, had told him that he found what looked like fluorescent markings on the animal's hide, similar to those found by Burgess and Valdez at Dulce two years before. Motsinger was no amateur and was using what he could of others' experience.

Jordan also told us that the animal's eye had been removed and that Motsinger had told him that the pathologists were unable to duplicate the surgical technique used. Jordan said that the director of the university pathology lab had conjectured that the eye was removed with some kind of experimental laser technique.

If this were true, it was the spring that could unload the mystery at last.

Motsinger had asked Jordan about mystery helicopter reports. The officer had received a report of an unidentified helicopter spotted on the ground by a rancher.

We called Motsinger. Yes, he said, this animal looked like the real thing. It was at the university lab. The necropsy had revealed that the eyes, tongue, scrotum, and testicles of the bull calf had been removed cleanly, and with a knife.

"It was definitely not predators," he assured us, no blood around the wounds, and no tracks near the carcass. He said nothing about conjectures on laser surgery. He would send us the pathology reports as soon as they were available. The lab was looking for poisons and tranquilizers that might have been used to bring the animal down, and there was evidence suggesting that needle marks were on the animal's neck. Indeed, he had found some small fluorescent spots on the hide and was still holding with his earlier notion about cults being the cause of this and other mutilations in Iowa. He had cult leads he couldn't discuss right now.

We realized that this case might completely eliminate the need to demonstrate inadequacies in the forthcoming Rommel Report. If the fluorescent markings could be shown to have the same chemical composition as the ones found by Valdez and Burgess in 1978, it would point to the animals being pre-marked for mutilation, and it would also demonstrate that the same techniques and the same substances were being used by mutilators in states several hundred miles apart, implying some sort of large-scale conspiracy. This case could vindicate Valdez, Burgess, and Gail Olson, and prove that the animals Rommel had seen in New

Mexico were not phony mutilations at all, but misidentified predator damage. It might also signal the start of another mutilation wave in the United States.

A few days later, we received a phone call from a man named Bob Rondell in Simla, Colorado. Simla is in Elbert County, the territory of Sheriff George Yarnell, and the place where the Colorado mute wave of 1975 had begun.

He had heard us on the Tony Larson Show in March and wanted to keep us posted. This was exactly what we wanted: fresh information from people at mutilation sites. Rondell was the president of a group called O.S.M.A., a psychic research organization that publishes a newsletter called the *O.S.M.A. Beacon*. He told us of three animals found mutilated in Colorado within the last few weeks. A horse, he said, had been found mutilated and "embalmed" in Cripple Creek, Colorado. A second horse had been found mutilated near Rush, Colorado, and it too showed almost no signs of normal deterioration even three weeks after death. And another horse had met a similar end, mutilated near Ramah, Colorado.

Rondell said the incidents had been covered by a local agricultural weekly, the *Ranchland Farm News*. He would send us a copy. All three incidents, Rondell claimed, had been accompanied by extremely odd circumstances.

The Ramah, Colorado, horse had been a classic mutilation, missing the usual array of parts. It was found lying in the center of a large circle in the grass. Nothing grew inside the circle, which was covered with a slippery residue of some kind. There was a strange blue haze that surrounded the carcass day and night, he said, but it could only be seen if you used your peripheral vision. Rondell had also heard about a fourth mutilated animal found recently near Pueblo, Colorado.

"Within thirty-six hours," he explained, "the carcass had bubbled into viscous goo and melted right into the ground."

He had the most information about the horse from Rush, Colorado. He knew the owner, Bob Blake. The horse had been found about a month before, in mid-April. It was missing its rectum and the skin over its penis and testicles. Both ears had been taken, as well as the eyelids and the musculature around the eyes, but the eyeballs had been left intact. The wounds were neat, he said, surgical in appearance. The horse also had two puncture marks in its flanks that looked like needle marks. For the last thirty days, he explained, it had not bloated or decomposed; it just lay there, untouched by predators.

Photos of the horse had come out strangely: the animal showed up in pink and green instead of its natural hues. The horse had been found just inside a small stand of trees, and a large willow tree next to the animal had been brutally twisted and pulled down, apparently by some powerful force.

Blake was now having trouble with some of his sheep, Rondell said. They were going blind, their eyes clouded over with a "weird blue haze." Blake, he said, thought both the mutilated horse and the blind sheep were the result of some kind of government experiment. The sheriff, George Yarnell, who had chased so many phantoms during 1975, had sent only a deputy when Blake had phoned in the mutilation.

"I think they've been scared by someone in the government," he said.

Rondell also told us that he had been having some problems of his own lately, and he felt they might be linked to his persistent interest in cattle mutilations and UFOs. He had seen a strange-looking helicopter coming up a river bottom recently.

"It sounded like a Volkswagen or a high-speed sewing machine, not like a helicopter," he explained. It was flying backward, tail first, and where the cockpit should have been there was blank steel. Instead, it had windows in the rear, or in what would have been the rear of a normal helicopter. It was black and had no markings.

Rondell also believed his phone was tapped. He had also been receiving phone calls from a man who claimed to be with the CIA, telling him to stop publishing the *O.S.M.A. Bulletin*.

"And every time I publish it, there's a cattle mutilation or a UFO sighting around this area," he said.

The storage shed holding copies of the newsletter had mysteriously blown up and burned to the ground in the middle of the night. His car had been vandalized. His Medicaid payments had been stopped for no apparent reason, and he was having tremendous difficulty getting them reinstated. Mysterious visitors to the town had started vicious rumors about him.

"I think someone is trying to put pressure on me," he explained.

Rondell explained that he had had some extremely clear photographs of a UFO. Two men dressed in black suits had come to his house one day and demanded that he give the pictures to them. They quickly flashed identification cards that snapped past him too fast to be read.

"I took out my shotgun and drove them off," he said. He had taken down the license number of their car as they drove away. He had checked with the county, and been told that there was no such license plate, that the numbers and letters were never issued in that combination in Colorado.

"I believe those men were extraterrestrials," Rondell told us.

Something told us that Mister Rondell might be a bit of a crank, and we thought it would be wise to corroborate his story, but before we could contact the rancher, Bob Blake, we received a second phone call.

The caller's name was Burt Jenkins, and he was a retired Air Force colonel, a transport pilot for twenty-seven years. Jenkins was a personal friend of the Blake family. Their horse had definitely been mutilated, he said: Rondell was correct about that. He confirmed Bob Rondell's description of the damage to the animal. It was obvious from the way he described the animal and its surroundings that he was a trained observer, experienced at expressing himself calmly and precisely in as few words as possible. He had seen the two punctures on the horse: they were on the animal's neck, on the side of the carcass which had been next to the ground. Blake had found them when he rolled the horse over.

This was a significant point. A wound on the downside meant that the animal might have received it while standing, and fallen over later.

"The rectal area and the anus were cut out and left on the ground nearby," Jenkins explained. The willow tree next to the carcass was twisted and broken down, as Rondell had said.

"I think it was taken down because the horse fell on it," the colonel ventured.

"You mean you think the horse was dropped from the air?"

"Yes," said Jenkins.

Well, here we were, in on the ground floor, just as we had wanted to be.

The colonel told us that the night the horse had been mutilated, Blake and his wife had heard a loud sound, a vehicle, "like a semi-trailer braking with its engine on a steep hill." The sound had gotten louder, as if it were approaching the house. Blake had thought it was the feed truck making a delivery. These trucks come at all hours of the day and night to drop their loads. The sound stopped. Blake had looked out toward the road, expecting to see the truck, but there was nothing there. About an hour later, the same sound started up again and grew progressively fainter, as if it was moving away from the ranch. The mutilated horse was found two or three days later, about a mile from the house, after a rain storm.

Apparently, Blake felt that this noise had not been a truck but some sort of aircraft that had been the vehicle used by the cattle mutilators to dispatch his horse.

As an ex-military man, Colonel Jenkins said he felt that someone had mutilated the Blake horse, but that the mode of operation of it and other mutilations he had read about didn't fit the style of the military. He believed that if there were a conspiracy of some kind to mutilate cattle, it would be run by some sort of private cartel, possibly with secret connection to the armed forces, in the "gray area between the government, the private sphere, and the military." He also felt that a group like this would be mutilating cattle for religious reasons. This cartel of powerful, wealthy individuals might be part of an occult group, dedicated to magical or Satanic worship of some sort, which used the animal parts in its rituals.

Jenkins speculated that the noise heard by Blake the night he believed the horse to have been mutilated might have been some kind of hovercraft, sent out by a larger mother ship, either a dirigible or a balloon, to run down the horse. We had considered this possibility ourselves months ago. We had even gone so far as to sketch out the design of the thing and how it could be carried beneath the gondola of a balloon or small dirigible.

A few days later we spoke with the horse's owner, Robert Blake. He was friendly and cooperative. His story matched some of the details in Rondell's version, and nearly all of those in Colonel Jenkins's.

Blake had called the sheriff, and a deputy had come out and examined the carcass.

"I think the sheriff's department is scared," he explained. "They don't want anything to do with this animal. They said later they thought the damage was from predators. I think they've been told to stay away from animal mutilations." Blake paused. "I think it's part of some government experiment."

Jenkins had told the truth, he assured us: no predators had touched the horse for over thirty days, and the carcass had not bloated. "It's just starting to decay now," he said.

The date was May 27. The horse had been found around April 12.

Blake had not called a veterinarian, and no medical people had looked at the animal, thus no official report. Blake kept talking about the condition of the animal. It really bothered him.

"That carcass just looked like it was embalmed," he said. "And the hide was stiff and crackly, like paper."

He confirmed that there had indeed been a full-sized willow tree freshly twisted and broken right next to the carcass. He felt that whoever had killed and mutilated the horse had also taken down the tree in some way. Yes, he had had some trouble with his sheep in the days after the horse was found.

"Their eyes were glazing over, they'd foam at the mouth and bloat up," he said. "But I penned them up for a few days and it went away."

There had been another strange artifact at the mutilation scene, he said. A branch, apparently cut from the fallen willow tree, had been found lying across the horse's carcass. This branch was in a Y shape, and looked very much like a divining rod used to dowse for water. He had given the branch to Dorothy Aldridge of the Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph* so she could have it analyzed.

Linda Howe, the TV producer from KMGH-TV in Denver, had come out just recently to film the horse for inclusion in her upcoming documentary. She, Blake said, had been amazed at the condition of the carcass and its lack of bloat after a full four weeks.

We noticed that the Blake case illustrated another facet of the mutilation phenomenon: the same people and the same locations kept cropping up again and again. Here we were, talking to Elbert County, the center of the 1975 Colorado wave. Blake had given the strangely cut willow branch to Dorothy Aldridge from the *Gazette-Telegraph*, and she had probably devoted more time and column space to covering the mute wave there in 1975 than any other Colorado reporter. And Linda Howe from KMGH-TV was showing up more and more frequently in our inquiries.

We called Tom Adams. He had, naturally, heard about the Blake case, and knew all the details from Linda Howe. Linda, he added, had graciously given him credit as a consultant for her documentary film about the mutilations.

Adams had also been picking up some information from New Mexico. He had heard rumors that Ken Rommel had made what Adams called a "180-degree turn."

"This is third-hand," he assured us, "but it comes from a source that communicates with Rommel. The word is that when his written report is released next month he's going to repudiate everything he said at his conference."

There was also a new wrinkle in the Rommel drama. According to Adams, the written report was actually being prepared by Professor Nancy Owen from the University of Arkansas Anthropology Department. She had gone to Santa Fe for two months to pull all of Rommel's data together and add the touch of an experienced academic researcher.

Owen was the author of the anthropological study on cattle mutilations that Rommel had mentioned at the end of his conference. Here was an interesting coincidence. An (assumedly) unbiased academic professional from a state several hundred miles away from New Mexico was writing Ken Rommel's report for him.

Meanwhile, Adams told us he was busy preparing to attend the national conference in Houston in a few weeks sponsored by MUFON, the Mutual UFO Network, a nationwide confederation of UFO investigators and buffs. One of the anticipated events of the conference was going to be Linda Howe's documentary about the mutilations, entitled "Strange Harvest." She was scheduled to show it there and deliver a talk on her research. David Perkins, of the Animal Mutilations Probe in Farisita, Colorado, would be there as well, as would Dr. Leo Sprinkle, the psychologist whose hypnotic regression of a UFO contactee had been included by Howe in her film.

Adams said he had heard of a horse mutilation recently reported in Gastonia, North Carolina. A veterinarian there had examined the animal while it was still alive. It had been found standing in its stall, castrated and bleeding to death. The vet had, according to Adams, been amazed at the quality of the surgery, and could not imagine how anyone could have subdued an animal of such size and strength in order to accomplish it.

Adams told us that the consensus among independent mutilation investigators was that there might not be a wave of mutilations in the U.S. this year.

"The pattern seems to have changed," he observed. Although there were still reports coming out of Alberta in Canada about a small wave there, the pattern of action in the United States seemed to have shifted to one of sporadic mutilations spread across the entire country.

About two weeks later, toward the middle of June, we spoke with Officer Gabe Valdez, recently back from Canada, where the mutilations were beginning to mount up. Ten animals had been confirmed as classic mutilations within the last two weeks. Murray Dale, TV news commentator with the Canadian station CFCN, had arranged to pay Valdez's expenses for the trip to Calgary so he could interview him on his show.

Things were hopping up north, Valdez said. Corporal Lynn Lauber, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer in charge of the mutilation investigation in Alberta, had completely shut off all contact between the RCMP and the Canadian press. Lauber had forbidden any of his men to say a word about the investigation to any media people. Gabe had no idea why the silence had been imposed. However, he had not spoken to Lauber because Lauber didn't want an outside official interfering with his investigation.

Valdez confirmed that Professor Nancy Owen was writing Rommel's report in Santa Fe. NBC-TV had recently called and was interested in covering his reaction when the Rommel Report was released in June or July.

Valdez had also heard from Peter Jordan in New Jersey that Senator Schmitt's office had unearthed some blockbuster information from Air Force files that would "blow Rommel right out of the water."

Harking back to our visit a few months before, he told us that Dr. Pendleton, the veterinarian from Utah whose name had appeared on our tape of the psychic's reading of the mutilation photos, had returned the pictures Gabe had sent him. Pendleton told Gabe that the marks on the carcass looked like chemical burns, but he couldn't be sure.

The July 1980 issue of *Omni* Magazine arrived at our office. On the very first page of the "Continuum" section was a short article called "Mutilation Madness," written by James Randi. The wheel had come full circle in only six months: here was the publication where all our work had begun, covering the mutilations again. Randi's article, however, held little resemblance to Harry Lebelson's piece in the January issue.

James Randi is a well-known writer, stage magician, escape artist, and illusionist. In the last several years he has been following in the footsteps of his idol, Harry Houdini, who spent years applying his expertise as a master of artificial magic effects, traveling about unmasking and denouncing phony spiritualists, conniving psychics, and fraudulent mediums bilking innocent believers out of their bankrolls. Randi had been exercising the same kind of anti-fake campaign against promoters of telekinesis, ESP, flying saucers, UFO contactee experiences, and the operation of real magick. He has successfully shown how the logic used to prove some theories about UFOs, extraterrestrials, and human contacts with these entities is utterly absurd and insupportable. Apparently, he had now taken aim at the cattle mutilations as well. The opening paragraph of his article read:

"How would you feel if you heard that a Federal agency, a district attorney, a state government, and a U.S. senator had banded together to finance a serious study into the reality of Santa Claus? And what if the study concluded that Santa Claus doesn't exist, and then the senator condemned the investigation?"*

Santa Claus was the cattle mutilation phenomenon, the district attorney was Eloy Martinez in Santa Fe, the Federal agency was the L.E.A.A., which supplied the money for Rommel's grant, the state was New Mexico, and the senator was Harrison Schmitt. Randi had quickly outlined the circumstances of Rommel's investigation and summarized the findings he released at his conference. He was convinced that Rommel's proofs were perfectly accurate: predators were the cause of all so-called mutilations. He expressed displeasure that Senator Schmitt had said of Rommel's investigation, "I don't think it can be defined as a definitive study."* He was surprised that Schmitt had rejected Rommel's claims that "there was false information in official reports from law officers."* He regretted that the "door has been left open for even more reports of 'mutilations,' "* and he referred to those who contested Rommel's findings as "true believers."

A national press debate was shaping up over cattle mutilations. From the investigators' network we had already heard talk about a counterconference in Albuquerque to refute Rommel in the national media. The press was expanding into the space left by the lack of large cattle mutilation activity.

We spoke with Howard Burgess, and he repeated his story about the mutilated cow found south of Albuquerque in April with its rectal wound sewn shut.

***Omni* Magazine, July 1980, "Mutilation Madness," James Randi.

"Go ask Randi what kind of a coyote carries a needle and thread," he suggested.

He had heard of another mutilation recently discovered right on the grounds of Kirtland Air Force Base, near Sandia Laboratories. It had come through word of mouth from his confidential sources at the lab, he said, and had not made the newspapers. Howard also mentioned something else about Rommel's comments at his press conference.

Reminding us that Rommel had said that the chip samples Howard had given him for tests, the ones that came from the UFO spotted over Taos, had been nothing but enamel house paint, Burgess said, "I believe that those samples were switched, either by Rommel or by the FBI lab. He substituted paint so that he could discredit me."

Either Burgess had been dreadfully wronged by Rommel in the ways he described and was justifiably fuming mad, or else he was dangerously short on judgment. He had so far accused the man of being mentally ill, a paid spy, and was now saying that he had committed criminal fraud in the course of an official investigation. For Burgess's sake we hoped the first set of circumstances was the real one.

We called Julian Barber, Senator Schmitt's press secretary in Washington, but he would tell us only that Schmitt was plainly dissatisfied with Rommel's announcements, and that if the written report proved equally unsatisfactory, he would press for a full-scale investigation by the FBI, far more detailed than the monitoring function the New Mexico office of the Bureau had conducted throughout 1979.

In early May, *Stigmata* number ten, covering the second quarter of 1980, arrived. We were arrested by a slight shift in its tone. Tom Adams opened the issue with an editorial entitled "The Rommel Probe: Worst Fears Realized." It outlined the position Rommel had put forth in his April press conference.

"We hope we are wrong," Adams wrote, "or that we have misinterpreted what we have heard—but the signs are discouraging." He noted that plans were "underway for an alternative media conference, at which evidence supporting the continued reality and viability of the mute phenomenon will be presented."

Adams made a plea. "We urge our readers to write to their senators and representatives on the state and federal level. They need to know of the continued public interest and concern in 'our' problem. But in reality—the best hope for continued progress in seeking solutions to the mutilation puzzle lies with privately-funded and supported efforts to sustain the investigation."

Adams was obviously suspicious of any formal investigation undertaken by any government agency. He had also made it known to us several times that he was continually trying to find interested parties who would offer financial backing for a large-scale probe by Project Stigma.

He referred to Rommel's evidence as "evidence," and wrote, "Taking all of this into consideration—and considering the evidence supporting the 'extramundane legitimacy' of the animal mutilations—doesn't it sound as though something is terribly wrong in Santa Fe?"

We pondered the meaning of his words: *extramundane legitimacy. Beyond earthly*; in other words, UFOs. Our objective Mr. Adams suddenly seemed to have an axe to grind. He had told us that Linda Howe had slanted her film toward the UFO connection to the mutilations. He had been her special consultant. He had recently been to a MUFON convention. Was Tom Adams saying that he believed cattle mutilations were caused by the occupants of UFOs?

He continued. "Is this the case of a fanatically misguided G-man on his last legs? Or does the almost-desperate tone of some of Rommel's pronouncements belie the very special sensitivity of a topic, the lid of which must be firmly slammed shut?" Did Rommel "enter the probe honestly and objectively only to be stifled by higher echelons? Is he sacrificing his reputation in a matter that—more than anything else—might be a concern of national security?"

The second article in *Stigmata* number ten was entitled "Mute Site Indentations:"

"Frequent mention is made of the seeming lack of culprit-tracks around mutilation sites," Adams wrote. "In some cases, however, evidence exists that 'something' interacted with ground or grass to produce depressions or indentations. Mutilation cases which include such markings are rare; in fact, they seem curiously concentrated in Colorado and northern New Mexico. We'll look at few representative cases, then compare them with recognized UFO landing traces."

What, we wondered, were "recognized UFO landing traces"? Apparently, Adams accepted certain data from various researchers as proof positive that some kind of unearthly spacecraft had definitely landed on the earth and left marks behind them.

The comparison was comprised of nine cattle mutilation cases in which investigators, police officers, or witnesses had found odd indentations near mutilated animals. The first case was the seminal Snippy the horse, in Alamosa, Colorado, in 1967. Numbers two and three were reports from South Dakota and Puerto Rico. Case number four was the bull owned by Manuel Gomez in Dulce, New Mexico, found in 1976, and investigated by Howard Burgess and Gabe Valdez. Cases five through nine were all from Logan County, Colorado, in 1976, and had all been investigated by ex-sheriff Tex Graves.

Adams had taken care to note that in the Gomez case, and in three of the five cases from Logan County, strange nocturnal lights had been observed in the area before, during, and after the mutilated animals were found.

Adams's latest *Stigmata* was disturbing. Throughout our association with him he had been unfailingly helpful, responsive, and extraordinarily civilized in the traditional Southern manner. Frankly, we liked him.

But he had consistently maintained that his position was objective, untainted by any predispositions for one perspective or another on the mutilations. This latest issue marked an abrupt departure from his previous position and clearly implied that the evidence said cattle mutilations were really caused by or deeply connected to UFOs and, by association, extraterrestrial beings.

That same day, we spoke with Linda Howe at KMGH-TV in Denver. Several months earlier she had been almost hostile in her refusal to speak with us about cattle mutilations, but now that her film was complete she was eager to talk shop. She wanted us to see a videotape copy of "Strange Harvest." KMGH would sell us one for a reasonable price.

She told us how she had brought the film with her to the MUFON conference in Houston a few weeks before.

"It was the hit of the conference," she told us.

She described the slant of the film as "based on first-hand testing. There are no psychics in it. I only interviewed lawmen, ranchers, and scientists." The film evolved through several theories about the mutilations—cults, predators, disease—toward UFOs, on which note it concluded.

"Look," she said, almost belligerently, "whatever's doing this has an enormous budget and incredible resources and mobility. Therefore it's got to be either the government, some fabulously wealthy international conspiracy, maybe corporate, or else it's extraterrestrials.

"The mystery helicopter sightings, they tend to make people think about government activities. I think the witnesses believed that what they saw were choppers because they saw them pointing a bright beam of light down at the ground. I think that may be an intentional red herring. I got someone to take me up in a Bell Cobra, a really advanced Army helicopter, and it was so noisy it was ridiculous. The choppers that people see are silent."

Howe had also tried an experiment with a Hughes 500-D, rated as the quietest civilian helicopter available.

"My station owns one; it's the traffic copter. I stood in the parking lot and had the pilot hover 500 feet above me. Loud, really loud. I sent him to 1,000 feet. I could still hear plenty of noise. Even after he took it to 1,500 feet it was still noisy; there was no way to miss it."

Based on these two experiences, Howe had concluded that none of the reportedly silent or night lights seen by witnesses could possibly have been helicopters. They had to be something outside the realm of known technology.

"Linda," we asked, "are you so well up on state-of-the-art aviation technology that you can positively assert that? After all, couldn't there be some helicopter, or some other kind of aircraft, military or otherwise, that could duplicate that kind of performance?"

"No way," she answered.

We put that question to her because for the last two weeks we had been poring over issues of *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, the *Wall Street Journal* of the aviation business. We had started with 1973, coincident with the beginning of the mutilation reports, and we found that there was an awful lot of imaginative experimentation going on. As far as we could tell, NASA and the armed forces could do just about anything they wanted to with aircraft, short of absurd acceleration and ninety-degree turns at several hundred miles per hour.

Howe, however, was not interested in equivocating. "You can't maintain objectivity forever," she declared. "Eventually, you have to commit yourself to a theory or position."

What about Rommel?

"I ignore him," she explained. "I believe he's being paid to cover up the real cause of the mutilations."

Did she believe that the real cause was UFOs?

"I haven't seen anything that works as well yet," she retorted.

"When I interviewed Rommel for 'Harvest,'" she continued, "there was only one point where he got real nervous. I asked him if he had ever contacted the CIA, the NSA, or the Defense Intelligence Agency and asked them if they had anything to do with the mutilations. He turned red and started fidgeting around. 'It would not be of any value to me to acknowledge that that question was posed,' he said. How about that?" she asked.

"Cattle mutilations are not like anything else I've ever seen," she said. "I've seen four of them with my own eyes. You know immediately there's something strange about them. The cuts are too precise. Abnormally precise."

How could she tell that they were so abnormal?

"You just know when you see one," she said.

What about the pathology reports, like the ones from McChesney at Colorado State University, saying that what cuts there were were obviously done with a knife?

"I condemn the CSU report," Howe said. "The lab was biased toward the CBI and said what Whiteside wanted to hear."

She told us a story. In 1975 Sheriff George Yarnell in Elbert County had been inundated with mutilation reports. The ones he had sent up to McChesney at CSU kept coming back as predator damage. Finally, he went to a dead cow and sliced out a hide sample himself, with his own knife. He even made funny notches in it so it would be recognizable. He sent it up to the university. A few days later the report came back: predator damage. Linda was not interested in anything that came out of the CSU pathology lab.

She told us she had done some tests on the carcass of Robert Blake's mutilated horse at Simla, Colorado, a month or so before. She had gone there with Dr. Richard Sigismund from Boulder. Sigismund was the psychologist and geologist who had roused the house with his impassioned speech about UFOs at Senator Schmitt's conference last year. He ran a black light over the carcass and found some fluorescent patches on the hide of its head. Howe had taken a sample, along with a sample of hide from the rump for a control, and sent them to Dr. Schoenfeld in Albuquerque for testing. She was looking for a correlation between these markings and the composition of the glowing streaks found by Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess on Manuel Gomez's cattle two years before at Dulce, New Mexico.

Howe's main concern was that the mutilation phenomenon would be ignored because of the results of investigations like the CBI's in 1975 and Rommel's in 1979. She was worried about the actual size of the phenomenon.

"There's no inkling of the number of classic mutilations that happen every year," she told us. "After these investigations, sheriffs won't want to investigate them anymore. Ranchers don't want to report them. I think there may be many more than we know about, thousands every year, possibly. One guy I know, a researcher in southern Colorado, told me he saw more than a hundred in his county in 1976, but none of them were reported."

Several days later we caught up by telephone with David Perkins of the Animal Mutilations Probe. Perkins had been on the road for the last month. He had been in Los Angeles for the winter, and had driven to Houston to attend the MUFON conference with Linda Howe, Dr. Leo Sprinkle, and Tom Adams. He had gradually made his way back across the southwest toward Colorado.

It turned out that he had been traveling with a reporter for the *National Enquirer* named Bob Pratt. Pratt had absorbed Perkins's expenses in return for a chance to pick his brain about cattle mutilations. Perkins had no idea what the *Enquirer* planned to do with the subject, but did tell us that Pratt had written several long features for the *Enquirer* on UFOs and contactees.

Perkins was feeling extremely shaky about any connection between UFOs and cattle mutilations. He had had a painful experience several weeks before, at the MUFON conference.

He, Linda Howe, and Dr. Leo Sprinkle had held a joyful reunion at the conference: Perkins had helped Howe with her film, supplying information and counseling, yet had received no credit. He had sat in silence as Howe's film unspooled before the rapt MUFON audience. Its case for UFOs as the probable force behind cattle mutilations was fiercely stated, he said. When the lights came up, Perkins had felt uneasy with her presentation. After years of giving extraterrestrials equal consideration for the deeds, along with the U.S. military and other conspiracy groups, Perkins suddenly could no longer back the UFO argument.

Howe, he said, got very upset. She had apparently been counting on him to help present her position at the conference.

"Dr. Sprinkle actually accused me of chickening out," he said. There was a mournful tone in his voice. "They tried to ignore me for the rest of the conference. They excluded me from all discussions and meetings."

He was shocked that a simple difference of opinion would turn them against him so sharply. If what Perkins had said was true, then the journalist Linda Howe and the psychologist Leo Sprinkle were as unwilling as the sarcastic Ken Rommel to permit the existence of points of view at variance with their own.

Over the next few weeks, rumors about confirmed cattle mutilations continued to trickle out of Canada. We spoke to Gabe Valdez again. He had had a telephone conversation with Corporal Lynn Lauber of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Lauber wasn't talking much, and he was still sitting tightly on the lid of his investigation. A full press blackout was still in effect in Alberta. Lauber had told Gabe that there had been no UFO sightings this year, and only four reported animals confirmed as true mutilations, downed with tranquilizer darts and cut with knives, according to Dr. David Green, the veterinary pathologist working with the RCMP.

We wanted to include Alberta in our research itinerary. Canada might be an excellent place to test out Rommel's hypothesis that much of the size of the mutilation phenomenon was the fault of irresponsible press coverage sensationalizing the incidents and inflating them to the point where they caused a panic mentality in ranchers. There was virtually no press coverage in Canada, so perhaps we would be able to see a different pattern. The fact that Lauber had told Valdez there were no UFO sightings there already indicated that the appearance of those sightings might have been somehow related to similar ones in the mute waves in the United States. We told Gabe we wanted to see Lauber.

Valdez was pessimistic, but we insisted.

A few days later, Valdez telephoned us. "Lauber says he'll see you. I told him you guys were OK. Call him."

Lauber was less than taciturn over the phone. He barely spoke. He would see us on two conditions. First, we were not to inform any of the local press of our visit.

"If they find out I spoke to you and not to them, they'll all come to headquarters and batter down the door. I don't want that." We agreed.

The second condition was that Lauber also did not want our visit to result in a blizzard of inquiries from the mutologist network in the United States. Again, we agreed.

Lauber warned us that he would not be able to show us any official reports or give us any copies. He would, however, set up a meeting with the RCMP pathologist, Dr. David Green.

Valdez agreed to honor Lauber's terms as well. The three of us made a pact: nothing that came out of Canada would be relayed to Howard Burgess, Linda Howe, Tom Adams, Peter Jordan, David Perkins, or anyone else on the network. Valdez was not aware that no Canadian insights would come his way either. Lauber had been concerned about Gabe's propensity for publicity, and since the Rommel tape we had begun to share Lauber's misgivings.

Now that we had an opportunity to sample the phenomenon in an area relatively free of the mythology, controversy, and rivalries of the American cattle mutilation scene, we were not about to jeopardize a pristine source. We did not feel like traitors to loyal sources, however. Our phone call to Howe and the last issue of *Stigmata* had caused us to question whether or not Adams's, Howe's, and the others' claims of objectivity might not be a good deal less accurate than they sounded.

It was time to make contact with Rommel. He surprised us by being hale, friendly, and highly cooperative. Of course he would meet with us for an interview in August, he said. Of course we could have a copy of the report. "It's due out soon," he said. All we had to do was send fifteen dollars to the district attorney's office to cover printing and mailing charges. Rommel had no cross words for Senator Schmitt, despite the quotes that had been attributed to him in the press.

"I'm not really sure just what the senator's position is," he said.

Despite the image we had pieced together from the press coverage of Rommel's conference, he maintained that he felt the press had been fair with him.

In his career with the FBI, Rommel told us, he had spent thirteen years in counter-espionage, working out of New York. He was looking forward to more challenging assignments in his new position with the Santa Fe DA's office.

"As far as this cattle mutilation business is concerned, I'm not married to the subject," he explained. "My report is done, and my involvement with it is over."

Five days later we accepted a thick package via UPS from Denver, Colorado. In it were two videotape cassettes of Linda Howe's documentary, "A Strange Harvest."

4

"A Strange Harvest"

There was little doubt that "A Strange Harvest" was entirely a product of Linda Howe's singular vision of the cattle mutilation phenomenon. The film was not exactly a textbook example of the collaborative art of film-making. The credits read:

Produced, Written, and Directed by Linda Moulton Howe;
Film editing, Linda Moulton Howe and Richard Lerner;
Audio, Mark O'Kane and Linda Moulton Howe;
Audio Editing, Linda Moulton Howe.

Linda Moulton Howe also narrated the film. It was clearly her very personal statement.

The film had been broadcast on the evening of May 25, 1980, during prime time. Later, *Denver Magazine* noted that it "drew the largest audience for a locally produced program in the history of Denver television."* From the point of view of Howe and KMGH-TV, it was a smashing success: an awful lot of Colorado residents watched it, and presumably were influenced by it.

Howe had supplied us with a complete transcript so that we could follow every detail of each segment, and we viewed the video cassettes half a dozen times.

"A Strange Harvest" came across like a documentary—with narration, on-camera interviews with lawmen, ranchers, and scientists, captioned frames indicating the dates and places where these people had been interviewed, and practical demonstrations. Howe's sepulchral narration iced the effect with serious tones worthy of Mike Wallace or Walter Cronkite discussing human rights violations in Central America. To the unpracticed eye and ear, in other words to the eye and ear of ninety-nine percent of the TV audience, "A Strange Harvest" had all the surface attributes of hard news. In reality, though, it quickly proved not to be what it appeared.

**Denver Magazine*, September 1980, "A Strange Harvest: Thoughts Behind the Scenes," Linda Moulton Howe.

The film opens with a montage that sets the mood: grisly color close-ups of the heads of reportedly mutilated cattle; skeletal jawbones gleaming against torn hide; empty, ghostly eye sockets; red wounds in bellies and rear ends alternate with aerial shots of a herd of cows. The photography of the herd of cows is done through a fisheye lens, which distorts and exaggerates the image, causing it to bulge frighteningly toward the viewer in a surreal effect good for horror movies. Under this montage of gore and weirdly distorted images runs electronic music produced by a synthesizer. The montage ends on a grainy still photograph, reproduced from a newspaper picture, of the well-known Snippy the horse. Howe begins her narration here.

"In September 1967, on the King Ranch in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, an Appaloosa mare called Snippy was found dead and stripped of flesh from the neck up. Some said this was the work of flying saucers. Who or whatever did it, no one knows."

Howe had launched into her discussion of the mutilations with an error. Snippy was not a mare, a female horse, but a gelding, a castrated *male* horse. Saying that Snippy was a mare was tantamount to reporting a murder in the newspaper and mistakenly saying that the body was that of a woman, when in fact it was that of a man.

She had also noted that some said Snippy's death was the work of flying saucers, and that this had never been proven or disproven. The implication here was that the case was still deeply shrouded with mystery but, in fact, what shrouded the Snippy case was jangling controversy about the cause of the horse's death. Howe's statement implied that nothing suitable was ever put forward to provide an alternate explanation to the UFO claim. This is simply not true. Snippy's carcass was examined by Dr. Robert O. Adams from Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. He found evidence that Snippy had had a severe infection in his right flank, and that this was probably what killed him. Dr. Adams felt that the horse had died of natural causes and been stripped by range predators. The main claimant that the horse had been killed by a UFO was the horse's owner, Nellie Lewis. The point was not whether Dr. Adams or Mrs. Lewis was correct, but rather that there had been heated disagreement about Snippy, and that some evidence of a normal, earthly explanation for the death had been presented to counter the UFO assertions. Yet Howe presented the case as if

UFOs had been the only explanation even considered by anyone who looked into Snippy's demise.

The film continued. Newspaper clippings from around the country cascaded across the screen: "The Anatomy of a Saucer Scare"; "Sightings Reported: Dead Horse Riddle Sparks UFO Buffs"; "Who, Or What, Mutilates Cattle?" On the soundtrack, Howe said, "Since that time [Snippy's death]—and perhaps even earlier in this century—thousands of cattle, horses, and other animals have been cut up in strange ways throughout the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, the Canary Islands, and possibly other South American and European countries."

Howe had definitely stated, point-blank and with no qualifications of any sort, that "*Thousands* of cattle, horses, and other animals have been cut up in strange ways." She had not said that there had been thousands of *reports* of incidents like this, that *some* people *claimed* that *perhaps* thousands of animals had been mutilated. This was fascinating. We had seen claims for the number of cattle mutilations since 1973 run from 8,000 to 12,000 animals. We played the tape through again. Howe did not mention the source of those figures. The weird synthesizer music continued to growl and squeal under her narration.

She named the states that had had mutilation reports in 1979: Iowa, Colorado, New Mexico, Arkansas, Kansas and Nebraska, and Texas. Isolated reports, no waves.

"Who or what is killing these animals?" she asked, as the outer space symphony of the background music swelled to full volume over her words.

Then the tape faded into a classic scene opener. A news teletype clattered loudly on the soundtrack. More newspaper clippings leafed across the screen: "Weird Mysterious Killing of Cattle Reported"; "CBI Chief—Mutilation Hunt Phantom Chase"; "The Mutilation Mystery: UFOs, Satanists, or Government Conspiracy?"; "Devil-Worshippers Called Possible Cattle Mutilators"; "Are Cow Killers From Outer Space?" Behind the clippings and the teletype, Howe listed the theories that had been advanced about the mutilations.

Then on the screen was a color closeup of a dead bull. Its belly was torn open, its ribs splayed out; it was a mess. There was nothing neat or surgical about it. There was the bull's owner, C. E. Potts, standing over the carcass. He was an elderly man with a nervous smile, dressed up in what looked like his Sunday best. Potts explained that he and some other people had been passing down the road and had smelled the dead bull. They had examined it. "Its sexual organs was all taken out and the eyelashes was taken out and that's all. We didn't know what could have happened unless it was a flying saucer or something. Being the pasture was locked up and had been for a year or two, and there's no tracks or no sign of anything that we could detect," said Mr. Potts.

"What about the idea that it's predators?" asked Linda Howe.

"Well, there wasn't no predators, there's been no predators bothered it since it's been dead, even. It couldn't have been killed by a predator because all the surgical work was done by an expert," replied Potts.

Potts had said that the pasture gate was locked: another weird aspect implied. Except that Howe never made it plain whether the bull was inside or outside the pasture, or if it would have been easy for someone to enter the pasture to kill and mutilate the animal. She never established whether or not predators and scavengers could have entered the pasture to tear up the carcass.

Potts had said the bull couldn't have been killed by a predator because all the surgical work was done by an expert. Was he a surgeon? How much surgery had he seen? Linda Howe slid by these questions. She had simply presented a man who claimed that he could think of no other explanation for his bull's death except that it might have been killed by a flying saucer. Neither she nor Potts had called a veterinarian, much less a veterinary pathologist, for an informed opinion.

The film cut to Manuel Gomez, speaking about the strange tripod tracks found near his dead and mutilated bull. The creepy synthesizer sounds started up again as Gomez said, "I didn't know what to think. It was kind of strange because we had never seen anything like that before." Tripod marks plus mystified rancher plus space music equaled shivers from beyond our reality.

Sheriff George Yarnell appeared on the screen. Howe was asking his opinion about the mutilation phenomenon. "If it goes into Canada, and there have been reports that have come up out of Puerto Rico and other parts of the world—if it goes on an international scale, do you think that would exclude Satanic cults and a military operation in our country?"

"Well, yeah," said Yarnell, "you'd be inclined to, to my way of thinking."

"And if they're excluded, what is left?" Howe asked.

"I don't know," Yarnell replied. "I don't know that either."

Obviously, Howe had tried to lead Yarnell, by a process of rapid elimination of possibilities, into answering "UFOs" or "Extraterrestrials" to her last question.

Next to appear was Carl Whiteside of the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. He spoke about the investigation he had led in Colorado in 1975. He had always been bothered, he said, by the lack of physical evidence at the scenes. He ran through each of the major theories that had been entertained as explanations for the mutilated cattle.

"Government," he said, beginning to tick the points off on his fingers. "Some government agency or agencies involved in biological warfare studies is one. I can't see any justification for that."

Here, Howe applied some technical magic from the video artist's repertoire. In the uppermost left-hand corner of the screen, above Whiteside's head, appeared the superimposed word "Gov't?"

Whiteside then mentioned the theory that UFOs or extraterrestrials were responsible, pointing out that if this were the case no local law enforcement agency would be able to solve it.

The word "UFOs?" appeared on the screen under the word "Gov't?" The two bright slugs hung there, just next to Carl Whiteside's ear.

Whiteside addressed the cult theory. He noted that in his experience with cult groups sooner or later some member of the group will come forward with information.

"That hasn't happened," he said.

The word "Cults?" popped onto the screen below "Gov't?" and "UFOs?"

Whiteside returned to the lack of physical evidence. "Unless you adopt the theory that you're dealing with super beings, extraterrestrials, or someone who has some infinite knowledge beyond ours in dealing with these types of matters, then there should be physical evidence around." He paused. "*If* the mutilations are real. And *if* they are significant. As I said earlier, we acknowledge that mutilations did occur. The question is, Is it a significant problem? My best guess is that it is not."

Linda Howe asked Whiteside, "To the rancher who loses six or eight cows that may be worth anywhere between $500 and $1,000 per cow, it's a significant problem, is it not?"

"It would be if you could determine that somebody was killing the cattle and mutilating them," Whiteside answered. "But all the information we have, all the scientific information, is that these cattle were dead, and that whatever was done to them was done post-mortem. So, if that be the case, you don't have any significant problem."

As Whiteside spoke, three more words materialized on the screen below "Gov't?" "UFOs?" and "Cults?" They were "Individuals?" "Disease?" and "Predators?" The columnar list now hung in the air beside Whiteside, the visual message powerful—it said that Carl Whiteside had entertained all these explanations and had been unable to satisfactorily prove or disprove any of them. However, on the audio track, Whiteside had just clearly explained that, based on scientific analysis and thorough investigation, coupled with reliable statistics, he had concluded that the nine actual mutilations of the 203 reported in Colorado in 1975 had been the result of someone human slicing up dead cows they had found. The animals, he was certain, had died of natural causes. Therefore he not only considered the Colorado mutilations a problem unworthy of serious concern, he considered the case closed.

The beauty of television is that it makes its point with pictures, not sound. When the viewer is confronted with an arresting image and a voice track that does not support or match that image, he will retain the visual impression, not the audio information. If we listened to the sound alone, Whiteside came across as a confident man who had reached a logical, acceptable conclusion about the Colorado mutilations, based on research he trusted. But if we watched the video in conjunction with the sound, we saw a man equally open to all the question-marked categories on the list that floated next to him on the screen, perplexed as much by one as by another.

Linda Howe had taken Carl Whiteside, next to Ken Rommel probably the strongest debunker of any imaginative theories about the cattle mutilations, and made him look uncertain as to whether or not UFOs and government conspiracies were equal to natural death and predator damage as an explanation for the mutilations. She had merely superimposed her own words, literally on top of those of a man whose entire discourse opposed her ideas. The magic of TV did the rest.

From Whiteside, the film immediately jumped to ex-Sheriff Tex Graves in Logan County, Colorado, which Howe characterized as "a favorite spot for the mutilators." By this time, we noticed, she had personified the responsible parties as "the mutilators,'' speaking as if it were common knowledge that someone (or *something*) had been firmly established as the culprit. She had completely dropped any attention to the notion of predators.

Speaking over color photographs of dead cows' heads stripped of flesh, Graves told of how unbelievable he and his deputies had found it that ''you could take an animal and do this without leaving some kind of tracks, some kind of evidence behind.''

Suddenly, we were looking at Dr. Albert McChesney in his laboratory at the CSU veterinary school.

''What force could hold down a 900-pound steer while its ear, tongue, rectum, and sex organs were removed?'' said Howe's narrative voice-over.

''What force could hold down a steer—'' What an image! An eleven-year-old could shoot it with a tranquilizer dart gun and render it unconscious in a matter of seconds. So could a cult member. A flash of lightning could knock it down like a bowling pin. Any one of hundreds of poisonous plants, injuries, parasites, or diseases could make it keel over like an empty pillowcase. A scrap of barbed wire or a three-penny nail swallowed accidentally could rupture an intestine and drop the animal like a brick.

''Well,'' said McChesney, ''I would of course surmise that the animal was dead before they were removed.''

McChesney continued. ''I am not trying to discredit the fact that there can be mutilations. But I just want to show that there is a very good chance that something else could have caused it. That not all of these lacerations and things like this are indeed from sharp knife mutilations.''

Tex Graves reappeared, describing how he had opened up the carcasses of reportedly mutilated animals he had investigated. ''The inner parts of these animals twenty-four hours after they were mutilated were kind of a medium grayish color . . . and they would turn to something like mush.''

Back on the screen, McChesney told Linda Howe what he had told us. The mushy, discolored organs Tex Graves had seen were in no way unusual. The fermenting contents of a cow's stomach would cause its insides to decompose and discolor rapidly from excessive heat.

Graves's description continued. ''The very first animal we had, we autopsied it in the field. We had a local vet with us. We looked for the vital organs inside: the heart, the lungs, the liver, the spleen, kidneys, were all gone. They were completely deteriorated.''

Graves was speaking as if he were describing something bizarre and inexplicable. Yet he was merely describing the results of normal decomposition in a bovine carcass.

Howe never bothered to ask how many other dead cattle Graves had looked inside of. McChesney added a comment to Graves's exclamation.

''My guess would be that they missed the heart or that they had some other membrane there that they mistook for the pericardium and just did not see the heart. Because for the heart to be removed without any opening in the chest wall would probably be impossible.''

Howe showed McChesney a photo of the first mutilated animal Graves had examined. Its lower jaw was cleanly stripped of all flesh.

''Would a natural predator ever strip a jaw clean like this one?'' she asked.

''I cannot tell you whether this would be from a sharp instrument or from scavenging,'' McChesney answered. He explained, as he had to us months earlier, that a cow's tongue will often protrude after it dies. Predators will start eating it. ''And if so,'' said the doctor, ''this cleaning of the jaw, the cheek muscles, would be just a natural extension of that entry into the body tissues.''

''But doesn't that look like a nice clean curve of a cut around in that lower jaw?'' she asked.

''It does, it looks quite clean,'' McChesney replied. ''But once again, we do not have all our facts together before we draw a conclusion. If I could see whether the hair was cut, or if there were deeper incisions, perhaps I could tell you specifically. But to look at one like this I would say it is in the realm of either a scavenger or a sharp knife mutilation. It could be either way.''

Scientist, lab man, prudent McChesney was offering a lesson to the wise: *you can't tell anything from pictures*.

Howe ignored this helpful nugget. The film immediately jumped to Tex Graves talking about strange tripod marks he had found in a pasture next to a mutilated cow. The pasture was ''almost like hard brick,'' Graves said. ''We found tripod marks twelve inches across. The tripod marks were fourteen feet apart. We found one set that had gone in the ground roughly eight inches . . . and it would take a good post-hole digger or a shovel to dig in like this. It indicated something very heavy had set down in this area, and yet there were no tracks leading from it nor to it.''

Graves's tripod marks were vaguely similar to the ones Gabe Valdez had found on the Gomez ranch at Dulce in 1978. He had concluded that the marks had been made by the landing of some sort of aircraft, and, since the pasture was so hard, he guessed that it had been tremendously heavy. An aircraft that could impress a mark eight inches deep into brick-hard dirt would weigh dozens of tons, perhaps more. He had not made this judgment in a vacuum.

''Almost nightly, when this was going on,'' Graves continued, ''we could pick out a very brilliant, huge, brilliant light in the sky.''

A still photo of a bright patch of white light in a black background filled the screen.

''We had a newsman take pictures of it with a very high-powered lens, but all we got out of this was the movement of it and the light showing very brilliant.''

Another photo of a bright light in the sky came up. A small, fine filament of light extruded from it.

''Several times we observed smaller lights come out of this aircraft and then come down toward earth,'' said Graves.

There was another photo of the white light, more fine lines leading from it.

''This huge, brilliant light would hang in the air and then when it would move it could move up and down, backwards and forwards, travel very rapidly and after a while—''

Here now was another photo of the light, looking like a doughnut.

''—these smaller lights would join up with the larger one and they would disappear.''

Ex-Sheriff Graves was describing the Logan County UFO that had been nicknamed ''Big Mama.'' He and several other law officers had seen it many times during 1976. Was Linda Howe trying to imply that the tripod holes in the hard pasture had been made by this light in the sky or one of the smaller lights that issued from it? It looked as though that might be her point. The next implicit step in the progression was that the lights, UFOs, aircraft, or whatever they were, had also mutilated cattle in Logan. Yet Howe had not applied the journalist's glass to Graves or his assertions. Again, she had asked no questions.

It was becoming more and more obvious that she was not interested in the facts around Graves's opinions. There was no doubt by this point that she was building a case for flying saucers, not conducting an investigation.

Other questions had gone unasked. What about the strange white light? Were there any astronomical or meteorological conditions which might have led to its appearance? Had Howe checked to see if the Army or Air Force had been testing any aircraft that could have accounted for what Tex Graves had seen? Had she had the photographs of the object analyzed by a professional photo expert? Where did the apparent movement of the object in the photograph come from? Had the photographer used a tripod, or held the camera in his hand? Was the movement on the film due to the light's own gyrations, or to the shakiness of the hand holding the long lens? Howe had not sought to establish or clarify any of these questions, yet she presented Graves as if he were the eyewitness to an actual UFO landing.

What about the relationship between sightings of the light and reported cattle mutilations? Had a freshly mutilated animal been discovered beneath a spot where the light had been the night before? Apparently not, or Howe would certainly have included it in the film. She had bypassed these lines of investigation as well, had failed to attempt any reasonable explanation of the events before presenting implications of unearthly intervention.

Next, one of Tex Graves's former deputies described how he and another man had seen an orange ball of light rise out of the ground behind their car. They jumped out and watched as the ball flew up to the car at a low altitude, and then made a ''complete ninety-degree right angle turn. And in the cockpit I could see three little lights, a red one and what looked like a white one, and either a green or blue. But I did not see any shape, nothing, no sound. And then the lights vanished and it was gone.''

Howe did not ask the man how far away the object was, nor how fast it was traveling. She did not ascertain if he was experienced in observing aircraft for identification. But then, she had not delved into whether or not Tex Graves was so experienced either.

Besides, what did the deputy's UFO sighting have to do with the cattle mutilations? Neither Linda Howe nor anyone else on the show had yet established anything more than that there had been *some* UFO sightings by *some* people, in *some* areas that had reported cattle mutilations.

The film next swept us into the grinding, rumbling cab of a large truck. Speaking from the driver's seat was a man in work clothes. This was Drexel Lawson, the owner of a livestock removal service in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He answered ranchers' calls in his trailer truck and hauled away their animals which had died from natural causes. Howe noted that he had hauled off about 4,000 dead animals in two years, including several mutilated ones. She did not note that the mere existence of a livestock removal service as a money-making concern indicated that dead cows were no novelty in eastern Colorado, nor that, next to the hauler's total of 4,000 unremarkable carcasses collected across nine Colorado counties in two years, the rumored mutilation toll of 10,000 animals nationwide since 1973 did not seem very large.

"My first mutilated pickup was in 1977," said Lawson. "It frankly scared the hell out of me, because I wasn't used to seeing things like that. The thing that scared me and astounded me so much was when livestock die they will normally lie and thrash in the grass or in the dirt. But this cow looked like she had just been picked up or turned over, and none of the grass or dirt or anything around her was disturbed or destroyed in any way from her dying."

Animal dead with no apparent sign of struggle. The cow "looked like she had been *picked up*." Obviously, the implication was that she had been lifted into the air, yet neither he nor Howe presented any evidence to support this.

Lawson next said that the cow hadn't had any blood in its body. "The blood was completely drained from her," he explained. How did Lawson know this? Instead of asking him this question, Howe returned to Dr. McChesney at CSU.

"I would say it would be virtually impossible," McChesney stated, "to withdraw not even all of the blood but just significant amounts of blood without leaving some telltale mark that blood vessels had been cut or that some—that the animal had been killed in this manner."

Lawson had reported no such signs. Nor had Linda Howe queried him about them.

"Probably," McChesney continued, "closer examination would have shown that in the dead animal's body the blood had gravitated to the deeper organs or to the down side."

Disregarding the doctor's interpretation, Howe asked him, "Do you know of anything on the Earth today in medicine or the military that could drain the blood from the animal?"

Now she was accelerating her distortion of the case with subtle twists of phrasing. The dialogue was straight out of a 1950s science fiction movie.

"I have no knowledge of it if it's there," McChesney answered. The doctor was, in effect, saying this kind of blood removal was impossible, and therefore that Lawson was probably wrong. But Howe had twisted the delivery of this information so that McChesney seemed to be saying that the blood *had* been removed by some supernormal means.

Back in the truck, Drexel Lawson was explaining to Howe that in all the mutilated cattle he had seen, the cuts had been "very, very precise surgical-type incision[s] and it's been clean, not hacked like an animal would." Howe did not ask Lawson how extensive his experience was at identifying and diagnosing precise surgical work. Instead, she asked, "What's your own personal theory or feeling about who or what is doing the mutilations?"

"Well," said Lawson, "I feel strongly about UFOs—the incisions a lot of times look like some type of burn or laser. The eyes, at least in some of the cattle I've picked up, has had a marbly clear look which looks like it's a flash burn or some type of laser burn."

This was clearly why Lawson had been included in the film. He was obviously Linda Howe's idea of an expert witness. After all, he saw hundreds of dead animals every year. Apparently she felt this qualified him to make tricky assessments of their condition usually reserved for veterinary pathologists with four years of college, four years of veterinary school, and five years of intensive post-graduate training. The haul-away man now said it looked like lasers to him. But how many of us have even seen an actual laser, let alone its effects on the flesh of a cow? Howe managed to bypass asking Lawson what his qualifications were for concluding that the marks he had seen were laser burns.

As to the marbly clear eyes of the dead cattle, Howe had no further questions.

She also neatly ignored the fact that thousands of cattle die every year because they are struck by lightning. Burn marks on dead cattle are a common sight. She had not brought this point up, nor asked Lawson if he could tell the difference between a lightning scorch mark and a laser burn. Lawson's testimony had taken her up the next rung of the UFO ladder. Laser death rays were now added to the presentation.

Now that we knew her direction, it was plain that Howe's points about the laser unit's cumbersome size and weight and its need for an AC power source were aimed to imply that no laser like this, i.e., no *earthly* laser, could have been used on any mutilated animals. Of course, she did not mention whether or not there were more compact laser units, perhaps designed for military application, that could have filled the bill.

"It is true," she continued, "that lasers seal off blood vessels as they penetrate tissue so there is little or no bleeding."

Dr. Arlen Meyers appeared on the screen, dressed in his floppy surgical garb and wearing an elastic operating-room cap. He was a laser surgeon at Rose Medical Center in Denver. He was examining two photographs. One was the rear end of a reported mutilation, a large hole Meyers said was "surrounded with burns and charred material." The other, he said, was a "very nice clean cut and had relatively normal underlying tissue."

"The first picture," he said "conceivably could have been caused by a burning or lasing type of instrument, although I think it would be very difficult given the state of the art today, at least to my knowledge, to bring a device to a field and inflict this sort of damage on a piece of livestock. It would be easier to bring the animal here."

The unspoken alternative hung in the air. *"Or into the spaceship."* Here was another point for the space aliens. The doctor said it probably couldn't be done with current technology. The implication was that it would therefore have to be done with a more advanced kind of light ray, possibly from outer space. Neither he nor Linda Howe informed the audience that it was nearly impossible to tell burn marks from patches of dried blood in photographs. But the name of the game here was not logical alternatives explored before extreme and implausible solutions.

Dr. Meyers was now standing behind a stainless steel surgical table. On the table were three supermarket chickens. Poised before the chickens in his scrub suit and cap, he looked as though he was about to begin a comedy skit from the old *Ernie Kovacs Show* or a Marx Brothers film.

"We asked Dr. Meyers to use the laser to try to make a perfect one-eighth-inch-deep circle in a chicken," Linda Moulton Howe intoned.

Here was a close-up of the fowl's breast. The laser beam hissed and burned into it. Steam gushed off the bird's flesh. Dr. Meyers explained that this was cell water evaporating from the heat of the beam, and that blood would do the same thing, leaving no traces behind at the wound. When he was done there was a neat, circular, charred hole one-eighth-inch deep in the chicken's flesh. Meyers explained that the hole could be made deeper by adjusting the laser's focal length and distance from the target.

Next, he attempted to make a similar circular wound in another bird with a scalpel.

Howe then flashed each wound on the screen. First the laser hole, then the scalpel cut. "Here's the scalpel cut again," she said. "Not perfectly round, a few angled edges."

Suddenly the screen framed an oval-shaped patch of missing hide on some part of a steer reported as mutilated in Colorado in October of 1979.

"Here's a perfect oval cut on a steer," she said. "There was also a perfect circular cut around the eye."

This was not reporting, nor was it any sort of proof. It was a very low form of false analogy. Linda Howe had introduced the laser and the scalpel cuts made by Dr. Meyers, and had then shuffled these two circular wounds in with an *apparently* circular wound in the body of a dead steer. She had made no spoken equation, and protected herself from any challenges there. But what she had done was introduce the neatness of a laser cut, juxtapose it with the relative roughness of a fresh scalpel incision, and then make a visual comparison to an *apparently* neat wound on an *allegedly* mutilated animal. The progression of images clearly stated that the wound on the cow was too neat to have been done with a scalpel, and, since the laser wound was neat, this incision on the steer must have been done by a laser.

The next subject covered was Senator Harrison Schmitt's April, 1979, conference in Albuquerque. Howe invoked it, as had Tom Adams and others, as incontestable proof of the absolute seriousness of the cattle mutilations. On screen, Senator Schmitt explained that the purpose of the conference was to draw the attention of the U.S. Department of Justice and raise a commitment from the New Mexico FBI to investigate the mystery. Complaints from his rancher constituents, backed up by the concern voiced by Gabe Valdez and other law officers, had prompted his interest.

Howe asked him if he had asked the CIA or any other intelligence unit if they were involved in the mutilations.

Schmitt admitted that he had not, though he considered it a legitimate question to ask. "However," he said, "the status of our intelligence community right now is such that something of this nature would not stay secret very long."

Next to be interviewed was Ken Rommel. Calm and assured, he sat behind his desk in the District Attorney's Office in Santa Fe. Rommel explained that, despite his recent retirement from the FBI, the Bureau had no connection with his investigation. His goal, he explained, was to establish whether cattle mutilations were even a criminal or law enforcement problem, or whether they existed at all.

"Linda," he said, "let me tell you something. Since I've gotten into this thing, I don't even like some of the terminology that is being used . . . for example, mutilation itself. Mutilation, as defined in the dictionary, is to deprive an animal or a human of an essential part. It implies that an animal is still alive. In cattle mutilations the cows are not alive, they are dead. So mutilations is not even a correct word."

An interesting point. Howe made no comment.

"Surgical precision," said Rommel, "we see it repeatedly. What is surgical precision?" Rather than allowing Rommel to answer the question or answering it herself, Howe did to Rommel what she had done to Carl Whiteside: she superimposed ambiguous pictures over his words.

The next interview subject was Lou Girodo, the chief investigator for the District Attorney's Office in Trinidad, Colorado. Girodo had been involved in coordinating a local investigation into cattle mutilations during 1975. He spoke of the lack of tracks around carcasses, the apparent precision of the wounds he saw, and the sightings of a helicopter in the area the night before a mutilated animal had been found. The woman who had seen the helicopter said it was very dark in color and had a large lifting sling hanging from it.

Accordingly, the scene now shifted to Fort Carson, Colorado, an army base with a combat helicopter detachment. Explaining that helicopter sightings and bright lights in the sky had "come up in almost every conversation about the cattle mutilation mystery," Howe had come here to run an experiment. Apparently, several people who had seen these mystery helicopters had said they were silent. Some had suggested that the Bell Cobra, developed for combat in Viet Nam, was a quiet helicopter. Howe had decided to test this idea.

"We asked the pilot to go out one mile, circle, and fly back over us at 500 feet," she said. The craft circled, flew over, and landed. The sound was deafening. A good point, but quite incomplete. How far had the witnesses to supposedly silent choppers been from the craft? We had already located and studied several NASA research reports on helicopter noise levels. At a distance of one-half mile or more, one could hear virtually no noise. Yet Howe's soundman had only recorded the aircraft's sound at close range. Of course it was noisy.

The chopper pilot spoke at length. When the mutilation reports were coming in several years ago, he and the other pilots had wondered about what type of copter could lift a cow from one site to another. He said that there weren't too many around the area that could do it, except the large cargo craft at Fort Carson. He concluded that they would make so much noise that they would scare away any animal they tried to approach.

"Is there such a thing as a silent helicopter?" Howe asked him.

"No," said the pilot. "Not a completely silent helicopter. A helicopter will always make some sort of noise—that will scare away an animal that is not used to that type of noise." The pilot's opinion, formed from what he had read in the newspapers and heard on the news, was that it would take a pilot of great ability to perform the mutilations as described. There was no one he knew of in the area, including military pilots, who had that kind of ability. Of course his opinion was based on the assumption that the actions attributed to helicopter-borne mutilators had been accurately reported by the press, an assumption we had already discovered to be quite doubtful.

The pilot continued. "If I had to choose between aliens of some sort coming down and doing these things to the animals and lifting the animals, as compared to a helicopter of our size or smaller helicopters doing these things, I would probably be more apt to choose the alien aspect of the cattle problems than the military or any type of small helicopter."

There you had it. An experienced combat pilot was saying he thought that cattle mutilations were the work of extraterrestrials. But he didn't say that. "If I *had to choose* between aliens . . . and helicopters," he had said. Who had said that he had to make this choice? Howe had no doubt primed her man before she turned on the camera, so his statements had also been quite specific. He had said "as compared to helicopters our size or smaller." Suppose different types of choppers had been used? Howe bypassed this option.

On the heels of this declaration by the chopper pilot, here was Lou Girodo from the Trinidad DA's office again. He was saying that he thought it *was* possible that the silent helicopters reported in areas experiencing cattle mutilations were actually UFOs in disguise.

Next New Mexico State Police Officer Gabe Valdez appeared on the screen.

Gabe told the story of the UFO that dropped its mysterious chips on the pickup truck at Taos. He told of how he had sent the material to Schoenfeld Laboratories in New Mexico for analysis.

Here was Dr. Schoenfeld himself, working in his laboratory.

"Most of his lab work is for physicians in the Albuquerque area," said Howe.

Interesting that Schoenfeld was not an industrial or chemical analyst, yet his findings on a non-medical substance had been taken by many people to be definitive.

The doctor described the so-called UFO chips as organic in nature, with characteristics similar to Teflon, the non-stick plastic used on frying pans and in low-friction machine bearings. He noted that the chips also contained a considerable amount of inorganic elements, including potassium, magnesium, calcium, and iron, and a small amount of titanium.

"The material looked somewhat like a paint chip," he said. "I don't believe it is. It has characteristics that remind me of flakes of metal that may have oxidized or sloughed off a hot instrument like the exhaust of an automobile or an airplane." *Or the exhaust of a flying saucer,* was the obvious unsaid statement.

Schoenfeld continued. "People have asked me if I think this could have come from outer space or an extraterrestrial body. I have no idea, but with those elements in it, if I learned it did come from one, I would not be surprised at all. We have found by various means that other planets do have gases and elements on them the same as we have here on Earth."

Howe lost no time in coupling this statement with one from Gabe Valdez.

"Either it's got to be a very highly sophisticated agency that has total secrecy and the money and technology, or it's something else. As far as an occult group being involved in it, I think it would have broken a long time ago."

"So what's left?" asked Linda Howe.

"Either the government or extraterrestrials," said Valdez. He laughed, perhaps realizing how Linda Moulton Howe had led him into a cul-de-sac with her question.

Carl Whiteside from the CBI appeared on the screen. He was emphatically explaining why he did not accept the notion that some government agency was responsible for the cattle mutilations. "To me, it's ludicrous," he said, "it's almost ridiculous to conceive that that would be a possibility . . . it just doesn't make sense to me that they would be involved in random mutilating [of] cattle on individual ranches or farms. If they were involved in something like that, they would have the resources to do it under controlled conditions." The weird synthesizer music rose behind his words.

So far, "A Strange Harvest" was an excellent *film*. It illustrated all the magical effects that only a motion picture can accomplish: the skillful juxtaposition of completely unrelated events to create a totally new effect not dependent on the content of any of its individual elements; the capacity to make images that are in no way similar appear to be the same thing; the cutting together of statements by people unconnected by time and place to make them appear to be saying something they never intended to say; the building of a fearful, foreboding, dramatic mood through the well-timed use of scary music and grisly pictures. "A Strange Harvest" was actually an excellent horror film.

The screen now presented a panoramic shot of a ranch in Wyoming. The wind howled mournfully on the soundtrack. Narrating, Linda Howe explained that this was the home of a rancher named Pat McGuire.

"In September, 1976," she said, "on a ridge about two miles from his trailer house, Mr. McGuire, his brother, and his cousin found two mutilated cows."

The next shot showed McGuire stretched out in a hypnotic trance in the office of Dr. Leo Sprinkle, the psychologist who specializes in hypnotic regressions of people who believe they have had some kind of contact experience with extraterrestrial beings. The hypnosis session was an attempt by McGuire and Dr. Sprinkle to recall some details about a strange event experienced by McGuire around the time he found the two mutilated cows.

"Dr. Sprinkle is one of the world's leading authorities in cases involving UFOs and human abductions," Howe explained. "He has worked with forty-seven people since 1967. Pat McGuire was his twenty-eighth case and the first concerning cattle mutilations."

Dr. Sprinkle was not described as an expert in cases where people under hypnosis revealed *apparent* memories of what *sounded like* abductions by UFOs. No maybes here. Sprinkle dealt with cases *definitively* involving humans who *had been* taken by space aliens.

Dr. Sprinkle encouraged McGuire to relive the night when he and his cousin sighted something strange in the sky:

McGUIRE: I says, "Mark, let's get the hell out of here." I says, "That star's comin'!" I says, "Either that or my eyes are bad." He says, "It's comin'!" It changed from a pure white to an orange. I says, "Mark, it's pickin' up a cow! Do you hear that cow? Hell, she's bawlin'!"

SPRINKLE: And it seems to be hovering over the ridge?

McGUIRE: Hoverin', pickin' up the cow!

SPRINKLE: Can you see the cow?

McGUIRE: No.

(He could not see the cow, but he insisted it was being lifted into the air!)

McGUIRE: Right, terrible.

SPRINKLE: Terrible bawling?

McGUIRE: Worse than I ever heard a cow. And I've heard a few. Then all of a sudden like they just threw a valve or a switch, everything stopped. The craft was still there. The cows, wasn't no bawlin'.

(How did he know the light was a *craft,* we wondered.)

SPRINKLE: No sound from the cattle?

McGUIRE: No, it was just like they threw a switch. Weird. Back of my neck, hair on the back of my neck was straight up.

McGuire and his cousin drove down to the spot the next day. "All we found was another cow and two miles [away] just a lone calf bawlin' for its mama. I said, 'They took her.' We never found her. Never did find her. The calf never did find its mother."

Speaking into the camera, Dr. Sprinkle pronounced his feelings about McGuire's memory and the cattle mutilations in general.

"There seems to be no good explanation for why these events [cattle mutilations] occur. The ranchers are puzzled and bothered, and yet they are not satisfied by what they hear from vets or public officials about predators, animal predators, being the explanation.

"My own speculation is that it is somehow tied in with the UFO phenomenon," said the doctor.

The inclusion of McGuire in the film was another example of purely circumstantial and associative reasoning, like all the other UFO-cattle mutilation connections we had seen so far, including the ones Howe had already made in the film. The most logical explanation for McGuire's memory was that the bawling animal he had heard was the lost calf itself, crying the night before, as it had been when he found it. Perhaps there never was another animal near it the night he saw the orange light. Most interesting, though, was that McGuire had to be placed into a hypnotic state in order to connect the sighting of the orange light and the bawling cow. The two images apparently did not exist in his conscious mind as connected to one another.

With her introduction of Dr. Sprinkle and the hypnotically recovered UFO experience of Pat McGuire, Linda Howe had also carried her entire approach to cattle mutilations and UFOs into an extremely questionable realm.

In the last fifteen years or so, these kinds of hypnotic regression/memory recovery incidents have become a staple of the UFO subculture. There are several dozen cases on record in which people who have either a vague sense of having once been abducted by alien beings, or disturbing dreams of this kind of experience, have been hypnotized and, under deep trance, have spun elaborate stories of trips to other planets, physical examinations by extraterrestrial beings, and messages given to them by these beings for the rest of mankind. Many of these individuals have drawn pictures of the aliens, the interiors of the spacecraft aboard which they believe they were taken, and supposed navigational star maps they were shown by the aliens. None of these people have ever brought back any artifacts to support their recollections. Whenever an artifact, such as a book in one case, was given by the aliens to one of these contactees, it always mysteriously "disappeared" some time after the incident. These hypnotic regression memories have come to be regarded by most

UFO buffs as definitive proof that humans are indeed being abducted by aliens, that aliens do in fact visit the Earth regularly, and that UFOs therefore are alien spacecraft. Without physical evidence to corroborate it independently, how much of a hypnotically retrieved experience is the memory of actual events experienced by the subject, and how much of it is pure imagination, possibly drawn from the same unconscious cauldron out of which dreams are ladled? Truly, no one knows.

For this reason, any hypnotic regression that reveals something out of the range of normal experience, like a UFO contact or a seeming recall of a former lifetime, must be viewed as a fascinating artifact but not as proof of anything at all. The only thing these regression sessions prove is that the people who report them *believe* they had the experience. They do not prove that the events actually happened. Despite this consideration, there are hundreds of thousands of people who accept UFO contact stories of this type as absolute proof of the existence of extraterrestrial contacts with humans.

And to cap the film's arguments that UFOs were the cause of cattle mutilations, Linda Howe finally presented her haymaker, the segment that would convince if all else failed to. We were back in the office of Dr. Leo Sprinkle, this time with another hypnotic regression subject, a woman named Judy Doraty. Howe pulled out all the stops in her introduction.

"What you are about to hear is perhaps the first and only known eyewitness account of a mutilation," she said. "Because Dr. Leo Sprinkle is recognized as one of the world's leading authorities on cases involving UFOs and human abduction, he was contacted by the Aerial Phenomenon Research Organization in Tucson, Arizona, to do hypnosis work with this woman."

Here was an interesting connection. Sprinkle has been a consultant with APRO for years. He includes this fact on his resume. APRO is the UFO group whose members contacted reporter Dorothy Aldridge at the Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph* during the 1975 mutilation wave in Colorado, to tell her that UFOs were not to blame. Judy Doraty had somehow found APRO with her abduction story. APRO had sent her to Sprinkle. The original connection between cattle mutilations, APRO, and Colorado had been thriving all these years, and was now being invoked by Howe.

Howe's narration explained that on a moonlit night in 1973, Judy Doraty, her mother, her daughter Cindy, and her brother and sister-in-law were all driving home from a bingo game in Houston, Texas. They watched a "strange bright light hover in the sky."

"In 1978," said Howe, "she underwent one hypnosis session which brought out part of her unusual experience—but not all of it."

This was obviously the part which dealt with cattle mutilations.

"She also had several psychiatric and personality evaluations all with results in the normal human behavior range," said Howe. "This second hypnosis session with Dr. Sprinkle occurred on March 13, 1980."

Here, now, was Mrs. Doraty in a hypnotic trance, reclining on a couch in Sprinkle's therapy room speaking to Judy Doraty, leading her back through the years to that night in 1973.

"Now you're standing outside your car," said Sprinkle. "Now you're looking up. What are your impressions?"

DORATY: It's like a spotlight shining down on the back of my car. And it's like it has substance to it. I can see an animal being taken up in this. I can see it squirming and trying to get free. And it's like it's being sucked up.

Here was the detail that had been missing from the Pat McGuire session.

DORATY: And it's taken into some sort of chamber. It's a little, round, tiny room. And I get nauseated at watching how they excise parts. It's done very quickly, but the calf doesn't die immediately. For some reason the calf's heart isn't taken... I don't know, it seems like it's still living, and that upset me very much. [she sighs] And then I can see the calf being lowered... like it's being dropped back down and when it's on the ground it's dead. I can see that it's not moving. But I feel very sick to my stomach at what I just witnessed.

SPRINKLE: You see the animal being cut up?

DORATY: Yes.

SPRINKLE: How is it being cut up?

DORATY: Dissected.

SPRINKLE: With knives?

DORATY: Instruments of some kind.

SPRINKLE: Can you describe the instruments?

DORATY: They're like a knife, but they have different kind of handles. More like a straight razor. It doesn't have movable parts, but it's like a straight razor type.

Doraty went on to describe the calf's tissue glistening, laid out flat. She saw what looked like needles or some type of probes stuck into this tissue, and into the animal's testicles, eyes, and tongue. Tubes led from the probes. The eyes, tongue, and testicles were then removed.

"And I feel like I'm not supposed to talk about it, really, because it was like a warning went off when I observed this," said Doraty.

SPRINKLE: A feeling that somehow you're not supposed to talk about it?

DORATY: Right, I'm not supposed to. I shouldn't have observed it.

SPRINKLE: Like you're watching something that's—

DORATY: I was told mentally that it was an accident, I should not have seen this.

SPRINKLE: Is anybody else around you?

DORATY: I feel the presence of other things, but I don't know what they are. I can't see them.

At this point, Doraty's story becomes quite strange.

SPRINKLE: You feel you're standing by the side of the road...by your car now? Or are you standing someplace else now?

DORATY: *I feel I'm in two places at once.*

SPRINKLE: OK, describe how you feel.

DORATY: *I feel like I was able to see what was going on in the craft, but I was also standing beside the road.*

Dr. Sprinkle next asked her to focus on what was going on inside the craft. "Be aware of who is standing around you," he instructed her.

DORATY: It appears to be two little men.

She described the little men. "Their heads look funny. They have long claw nails. They have very large eyes. They're very hypnotic. Their eyes do not blink."

Doraty described their actions. "They were very snappy about their movements and they knew exactly what they were doing, and I felt a little better because I, for some reason they projected that it was necessary that this be done . . . you know, that it was for our betterment, for the betterment of mankind that this was done . . . that they were more or less watching out for us."

SPRINKLE: So you felt better when you had that impression?

DORATY: Yes.

SPRINKLE: Not only of precision, but also a benevolent or kind attitude toward people?

DORATY: Right . . . I can't say that they were kind.

SPRINKLE: Concerned?

DORATY: I can't even say that they were concerned. They were just doing a job that . . . evidently it affects them, too.

And here was the kicker to seal up David Perkins's theory about the proximity relationship between cattle mutilations and nuclear sites.

DORATY: And it has something to do with somehow nuclear waste or testing or . . . They've been here for quite some time and they test the soil as well as our water as well as our animal life, our vegetation. I questioned why they aren't saying more and why they can't stop it if they're so knowledgeable, and they get angry. I don't know. I don't understand that.

SPRINKLE: You don't understand why they get angry?

DORATY: I don't know why, I don't know why they get angry and I don't know why they can't stop it, if they're so knowledgeable.

Later in the session, Judy Doraty seems to see her daughter Cindy sitting in the car one minute and gone the next.

SPRINKLE: Be aware of yourself standing beside the car. You can be aware of yourself standing in the craft. Now let yourself be aware where Cindy is.

DORATY: I know I have a feeling of fear.

SPRINKLE: Let yourself go on through the experience. What impressions come to mind?

DORATY: I just visualize her on a table.

SPRINKLE: OK, what happens next?

DORATY: I'm just afraid that they're going to do to her what they did to the animal.

She begins to cry. She pounds the arm of her reclining chair.

SPRINKLE: Let yourself relax deeply.

DORATY: No, I don't want to!

She flings her head up and opens her eyes angrily at Sprinkle.

SPRINKLE: You can tolerate—

DORATY: Not yet!

Doraty was clearly agitated, crying freely. After a few attempts, Dr. Sprinkle succeeded in calming her.

SPRINKLE: Let yourself go on through the experience, let yourself be aware. Let yourself relax deeply. You can be aware of what happens next.

DORATY: They put her to sleep, *I guess.*

SPRINKLE: OK, they put her to sleep. OK, what's happening now?

DORATY: They're just examining her, *I guess*. But I'm so afraid they're going to cut her or something.

SPRINKLE: But they don't harm her?

DORATY: No.

SPRINKLE: No. OK, what does happen?

DORATY: They just take some samples . . . from her.

SPRINKLE: What kind of samples?

DORATY: I don't know. Just scrapings, like . . . they go inside her mouth. I can see her lying there, and they just kind of scrape little pieces off.

SPRINKLE: Any other kind of samples?

DORATY: That's all I can remember.

Linda Howe recommenced her narration. "The preceding scenes were taken from a four-hour hypnosis session. Dr. Sprinkle stated afterward that Judy Doraty is, in his professional opinion, a sincere, honest, and credible person.

"What happened before our camera was her first complete and vivid recall of her 1973 experience in Texas."

A question immediately leapt to mind. Doraty had been hypnotically regressed by Dr. Sprinkle only once before to recall this information, in 1978. This was only her second session. Howe had said that this session was her first complete and vivid recall of her experience. How, then, did Linda Howe know enough to bring a film crew to Sprinkle's office to record Doraty's comments about the mutilated calf? Either Doraty had talked about seeing a calf mutilated during her first hypnosis session two years before, or Howe had gone to the trouble and expense of hauling a camera crew into Laramie on the off chance that she might come away with something useful. This was hardly likely. The obvious answer was that Howe had known Doraty would reveal something under hypnosis. This made other queries float to the surface.

Without external evidence to corroborate the statements, it is impossible to know whether a subject's hypnotically recalled memories are those of actual events, imaginary events, or some combination of the two.

Did Judy Doraty know that the crew which was to film her was making a movie about cattle mutilations and UFOs? If she did, how had this knowledge affected what came up in her session? People under hypnosis are highly suggestible. People who are good hypnotic subjects also tend to be highly suggestible in their daily lives. How had the circumstances influenced Doraty's recall?

How much had Doraty and Sprinkle, or Doraty and Howe, discussed the connection between cattle mutilations and UFOs before Doraty was hypnotized?

Doraty's recall was powerfully convincing, but it did not prove that the mental events she was reacting to actually took place. How much had Judy Doraty read about cattle mutilations, and how much of this information had been retained in her unconscious, possibly to emerge in the form of a confabulated hypnotic recall? Howe did not touch these questions. And there were others, equally crucial.

Howe had also missed several opportunities to corroborate Doraty's story, to see if it really happened. Doraty knew the date, time, and place that these strange incidents had supposedly occurred. Doraty said she saw the mutilated calf lowered from the spacecraft, and lying dead on the ground after surgery. Howe could have traced the circumstances surrounding the incident. She could have checked the newspapers in the area to see if anyone had found that mutilated calf around the time Doraty reported her experience took place. She could have spoken to the ranchers in the area to see if anyone had lost a calf or found a mutilated animal that might have corresponded to the one described by Doraty. She did none of these things.

Again, how much of the literature about cattle mutilations had Doraty read before this hypnosis session? Had Howe or Sprinkle discussed the radiation monitoring theories with her? Had anyone from APRO, with whom Doraty had been in contact for at least two years, ever discussed these things with her, and possibly implanted the images in her unconscious, to be brought forth later in the form of a seeming recall of actual events? Exactly how impressionable was Judy Doraty? What was her psychological profile, beyond the fact that all her test results indicated that she fell within the range of normal sanity? These crucial questions also went unanswered.

Ideally, a hypnotist does nothing which might suggest content to a regression subject, or might force the subject to confabulate. Yet Sprinkle had done just this. The only way to learn whether or not his hypnotic technique, and his declared belief in UFOs and extraterrestrial beings, had influenced Doraty's responses, would be to have him hypnotize one of us. In fact, one of us did this a few weeks later.

The Doraty session had also touched on another aspect of cattle mutilations that had come up in our research. Many law enforcement officers, at the height of their involvement in investigating cattle mutilation waves in their districts, had expressed the fear that whoever was doing this to animals might soon graduate to mutilating humans. Lawmen often explained that their intense commitment to solving the cattle mutilation cases was to insure that this would never happen. Doraty's statement had broached this issue. The film immediately cut to Lou Girodo, the district attorney's investigator from Trinidad, Colorado.

"If extraterrestrials are the ones mutilating animals, what do you think the implications are for this planet?" Linda Howe asked him.

Girodo explained how all the law officers he knew had been concerned that the cattle mutilations would move from animals to human beings. "Thank God," he said, "it hasn't happened." He had no idea what they were doing with the tissues they removed from the animals. "There's a reason for it—it's not haphazard," he said. "There's a pattern to it.

"If we have beings from outer space doing this with the capabilities to do things like this, what can we as a human race do? If they have the knowledge and the technology that it looks like they have, we're powerless. So maybe it's a wait-and-see game. I can't see anything else to do."

Another point for Howe's argument. We could almost see the headline, as if it were to appear in a newspaper: "Experienced Law Officer Says Humans Powerless Against Mutilating Space Invaders."

For the wrap-up of "A Strange Harvest," Linda Howe stretched her reach to the limit, to include a psychic's prediction to explain why extraterrestrials were mutilating animals.

On the screen, Howe stood outdoors in a thin stand of trees. Behind her was Bob Blake's reportedly mutilated horse, not looking very bloated or decomposed even though it had been dead for about a month. Howe explained that she felt that the handful of horse mutilations in 1980 might be significant in some way. She read from a prediction made by a psychic about the cattle mutilations. The psychic predicted a change in the activity. Apparently, Howe saw this as the seeming change to horses as opposed to cows as mutilation targets. She continued to read the psychic's words. The mutilations had something to do with a "serum" that was being manufactured from the parts by the extraterrestrials. It would, Howe said, be returned to the human race, for its betterment of course, at the proper time in the future.

Howe had ended with an evangelical, messianic note about benevolent space aliens who would somehow save or improve the human race, the same kind of doctrine preached by so many UFO contactees who claim that we will all be "delivered" in much the same sense as the righteous will be delivered by Jesus, by the divine alien brothers when they finally arrive. She was living proof of exactly the kind of disturbing quasi-religious devotion to flying saucers that Jacques Vallee had examined in *Messengers of Deception*. She had built her case in the same way all other contactee/UFO believers had built theirs: suppositions, unsupported assertions, hypnotic regressions, vehement ignorance of any other possible explanations for seemingly strange events, and what appeared to be an intentional lack of knowledge about factors which might have called the UFO case into question. This wasn't research, it was the delivery of dogma.

The spooky, science-fiction synthesizer music welled up. As the final credits rolled across the screen, Richard Sigismund appeared in a small square at the top of the frame, Sigismund, the UFO researcher from Boulder, Colorado, who had made the impassioned plea for UFOs at Senator Schmitt's Albuquerque conference.

"If we are dealing with surreptitious, covert, highly cautious culture contact between highly developed extraterrestrials and our Earth planetary civilization," he intoned, "then one of the primary considerations that we must deal with is the problem of culture shock. In any possible contact between civilizations such as I've described, I think the superior civilization would be very careful to slowly condition the subject culture to its presence so as not to induce what we label culture shock, which is a very profound psychological, sociological, philosophical disturbance among the people when exposed to a culture which shocks their traditional values—"

Credit: Research Consultants—*Tom Adams, Paris, Texas; Aerial Phenomenon Research Organization* (APRO), *Tuscon, Arizona.*

It seemed to us that "A Strange Harvest" was quite close in spirit to Orson Welles's radio production of *War of the Worlds*. Written in 1898, H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* is a classic science fiction novel about an invasion of the Earth by an invincible army from Mars. Orson Welles's Mercury Theatre adapted it into a radio play in the form of a mock news broadcast about the invasion. Typical of Welles's meticulous style, the script was superbly tailored to realistically match actual news coverage. Welles had successfully manipulated the audience's consciousness. There was, however, one crucial difference between Welles and Howe. Welles had a disclaimer before "War of the Worlds" was run. And although it sounded like a news broadcast, it was never intended to be one. The panic it engendered was purely accidental.

Linda Howe's "A Strange Harvest" did exactly the opposite. She had given it the form of a news documentary, not for dramatic effect but because she intended viewers to see it as news, meaning true, accurate, objective, well-considered and thoroughly researched reporting. The film carried no disclaimer, because Howe truly believed that the case she was presenting was logical and sensible, when in fact it was not a clear view of either the cattle mutilation phenomenon or of the controversies surrounding the UFO phenomenon.

Perhaps Ken Rommel had a point. Perhaps this was what he meant by press distortion of the cattle mutilations. It was conceivable that similar kinds of overdramatization, sensationalism, and distortion had been practiced by many local reporters covering the mutilations in many states. We would be extremely cautious about accepting news accounts from here on in.

Howe's film had also demonstrated to us how political the cattle mutilation issue had become. She had stuck her neck out very far indeed with "A Strange Harvest." We had a sense that perhaps she was after something larger than merely attempting to convince people to believe in UFOs as the cause of cattle mutilations. She had taken the film to the MUFON conference in Houston and come away as a darling of the UFO subculture. We began to feel a tug of deep suspicion about Howe and the rest of the mutology network.

Not too long afterward, we received a copy of Tom Adams's *Stigmata* number eleven, covering the third quarter of 1980. The lack of a mute wave in the United States for the second year in a row had prompted him to title his editorial "The Silent Siege." Adams concentrated on the belief, now held by many members of the mutologists' network, that there were actually hundreds or thousands of mutilations each year that were never reported.

"It has been suspected by Project Stigma and others that the percentage of unreported cases could well be substantial," he said. "We might be fortunate to be aware of half the mutilations that have actually occurred.

"There may not have been as many mutilations in the last couple of years as in 1975 or 1976; but the overriding reason for the apparent decline in mutilation activity may be the refusal of livestock owners to report mutilations, rather than the actual drop in the number of attacks."

Adams offered no facts to back up the assumption. He cited the failure of large investigative police efforts to solve the mystery, the inability of local sheriffs to make any headway in the cases, the ridicule which had descended on some ranchers and sheriffs who had steadily maintained that there was something more than predators involved, and the frequent refusal of sheriffs' departments to take mutilation reports seriously as the reasons for his theory.

"She uncovered a startling number of unreported mutilations in an area of the West that had endured mutilations in the past. We've learned of a similar area in Kansas where many mutes have occurred but few, if any, are ever reported."

Tom Adams was now beginning to sound a little like Linda Howe. His idea about scores of unreported mutilations was interesting, but what was it based on? We had begun to wonder whether Tom Adams simply logged every rumor, hearsay report, and unconfirmed claim as a true mutilation. The one lesson we had already learned was that there were apparently some real mutilations, but there were also an awful lot of unreal ones that became predator damage on closer scrutiny. The trouble was that you needed an expert to tell the difference, and an expert was a veterinary pathologist—and Adams, we knew, was not one of those.

Turning the page, we encountered a two-page article entitled "A Mutilation Documentary." It was a review of "A Strange Harvest." Adams called it a "very impressive piece of work."

Setting aside Adams's own conflict of interest here, it was now obvious that he did not know the difference between objectivity and propaganda. Either that, or the decidedly strong UFO current we had encountered in the last issue of *Stigmata* was an indication that for all his openness, graciousness, and helpfulness, Tom Adams was really a UFO believer searching for the one connection he needed to link UFOs and cattle mutilations.

He had constructed his concept of a "silent siege" without providing a shred of evidence to support it. This looked like an attempt to take the apparent slowdown or even cessation of mutilations and turn it inside out, transforming it into an even more mysterious phenomenon. It seemed that Adams was trying to find some way to perpetuate the mutilation mystery, and for good reasons. He was its prime guru and was known to thousands of people around the country as an expert. Cattle mutilations had made Tom Adams a power of sorts, a man to be reckoned with. Newspapers from as far away as Canada had called to interview him. To a great extent, Adams controlled the national flow of information about cattle mutilations. If the mutilations just evaporated away, he and *Stigmata* would no longer be relevant.

We thought back to our very first phone conversation with Adams, several months before. "I don't make hypotheses," he had said, with a hint of pride in his voice. "It gets in the way of objectivity. I collect any information I can find, and pass it along."

Was Tom Adams trying to put one over on the rest of the world, or had he simply succeeded in completely fooling himself about his own actions and what they meant? This question was suddenly as important as the larger mystery of the cattle mutilation phenomenon itself, because if the Father of Mutology turned out to be a self-deceived fool or a charlatan, then there was an element to all this that we had not bargained for.

As if in answer to our impression that Adams would do anything to keep the cattle mutilation mystery going, we turned the page and found that the rest of *Stigmata* number eleven was devoted to accounts and translated articles from foreign newspapers about mutilation reports from South America, Central America, Mexico, and the Canary Islands. There wasn't a word about any specific details on the horrific silent siege Adams had just finished warning his readers about.

A few days later, the Rommel Report landed in our office.

5

The Rommel Report

At a weight of two pounds and a length of 297 bound pages, the Rommel Report was the most substantial piece of material we'd seen yet. Its official title was emblazoned across its buff-colored cover in bold type half an inch high: *OPERATION ANIMAL MUTILATION: Report of the District Attorney, First Judicial District, State of New Mexico*. Below this was Rommel's byline, in letters almost as large as the title.

Ken Rommel's list of acknowledgments left no doubt that he had consulted with a panel of experts to support his findings. Along with ten police investigators, officers, and high-ranking officials on the level of Carl Whiteside and the director of the New Mexico State Police, Rommel had consulted with inspectors and executives from state livestock boards; the director, assistant director, and other officials from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish; officials at several state departments of agriculture; several news reporters, including Dorothy Aldridge from the Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph;* specialists in mining, mineral and petroleum prospecting, and nuclear radiation measurement; an officer of the New Mexico Air National Guard; and various scientists, including a pharmacist and a pharmacologist. He had also been helped by a veritable hospital full of veterinarians and veterinary pathologists, sixteen in all. Of these, six were not only specialists in various branches of veterinary diagnostic pathology, but heads of university pathology departments, directors of diagnostic laboratories, or similarly acknowledged experts on the dying, death, and after-death condition of cattle.

Howard Burgess was included in the acknowledgments, along with Tommy Roy Blann, the paranormal investigator who had spoken so passionately at Senator Schmitt's conference.

New Mexico State Police Officer Gabe Valdez was conspicuously missing from the list, as well as Dr. Nancy Owen, the Arkansas anthropologist who had organized all of Rommel's material for him and written most, if not all, of the Rommel Report.

Predictably, given that it was the chronicle of an investigation by a professional FBI agent and had been written by a seasoned academic, the report read like a cross between a grand jury report and a Ph.D. thesis. It was dry but splendidly organized. Rommel and Owen had left almost no room for speculation; they had attempted to cover every possible detail. Rommel fully addressed each opposing theory, demonstrating how it was unreasonable, insupportable, or inappropriate. By floating his case on fact after fact, with scrupulous reference to official documents, pointing out inconsistencies in those documents as well as supporting statements, he appealed to reason rather than gut fear of the unknown. And he bolstered his case with the testimony of dozens of acknowledged experts in wildlife and predator behavior, veterinary medicine, pathology, police investigation, livestock management, and chemistry. Background research was the glue that held Rommel's Report together.

All the methods Rommel used to support his argument were those used in courts of law; and he had personally investigated fifteen of the twenty-seven mutilated animals reported to him. The rest had been investigated by trained observers. He followed the scientific technique of defining his terms, constructing a method, and then building a progressively more specific argument on logically derived conclusions, and he supported each of these conclusions in detail and with copious references.

Under "Investigative Policy," Rommel explained that he had chosen to be frugal with comment to the press during the investigation, a policy he had used as an FBI agent. After reviewing a collection of newspaper clippings about cattle mutilation, he felt that "too many irresponsible statements" had been made. The media, he had learned, "had played a major role in alarming ranchers to the point where some of them had formed vigilante committees.

"Moreover," he explained, "I wanted to see how the media would cover incidents without the benefit of my comments. In other words, I wanted to see if the media itself was part of the problem."

In the next section, called "Objectives and Procedures," he listed the five goals of the investigation:

(1) To determine the reliability of the information on which the grant was based.

(2) To determine the cause of as many mutilations as possible, especially those reported in New Mexico.

(3) To determine if livestock mutilations as described constitute a major law enforcement problem.

(4) If these mutilations do constitute a major law enforcement problem, to determine the scope of the problem and offer recommendations on how to deal with it.

(5) If it is shown that the mutilation phenomenon is not a law enforcement problem, to recommend that no further law enforcement investigations be funded.

The New Mexico Mutes Revisited

The second chapter of the report was called "A Popular History of Livestock Mutilations in New Mexico, Winter 1975–Spring 1979." Here, Rommel laid out the definition of a "classic mutilation," and explained that his year-by-year summary of the mutilation phenomenon from 1975 on had two purposes:

"To show the type of information on which the district attorney based his decision to apply for the L.E.A.A. grant"; and to "indicate the climate of opinion and belief that prevailed when I assumed the role of project director in May 1979." The material was drawn primarily from newspaper and magazine articles that were available to New Mexicans.

Rommel covered the first flurry of mutilation reports, along with the mystery helicopter sightings, that occurred in New Mexico in 1975. He traced the linkage between these two phenomena in the New Mexico newspapers, and noted that even at this early point the strangeness, lack of blood, and the like, had been reported in the mutilation cases.

"The mutilation phenomenon escalated in 1976, according to some reporters," the text read. "In addition, the target of mutilations seemed to shift from the eastern plains to northern New Mexico. Dulce, a small community in northern Rio Arriba

County, received considerable attention that year as a result of an incident reported on June 13."

This was the first Gomez mutilation, where the round tripod marks had been discovered by Gabe Valdez. Rommel noted that, although mutilations had been reported that year in other parts of the state, the Dulce incident seemed to generate the most speculation and interest.

"After the rash of incidents that were investigated in 1976, 1977 was a very slow year in terms of the number of reported mutilations," Rommel wrote. "Only a handful of cases were investigated." He pointed out that in the fall of that year Fritz Thompson of the *Albuquerque Journal* published a major article about cattle mutilations in *Impact*, the *Journal*'s magazine.

We had a copy of this article. It was probably the best researched and most coolly informative on the subject of any we had seen.

"The impact of this article on the public is difficult to assess," said Rommel, "but within the next few months more mutilations were reported." It was too bad he had applied this innuendo to Thompson's article, when there were many others far more deserving of a snide implication.

"In 1978, there was a dramatic increase in the number of reported mutilations," wrote Rommel. "Some of the most publicized cases again occurred within the vicinity of the little community of Dulce." Rommel told of the second animal lost by Manuel Gomez and investigated by Officer Gabe Valdez. Throughout the report, he did not mention either Valdez's or Gomez's names, although he freely used the names of other people. After a while, we understood his strategy.

In his later analyses of Valdez's official reports and investigations he danced on the edge of a libel suit by pointing out inconsistencies, errors, lapses of judgment, and other unprofessional mistakes. In leaving Valdez and Gomez unnamed, he was covering himself.

He accurately attributed certain assertions to "the investigating officer" (Valdez) in these cases, including the officer's claim that one of the animal's horns had been broken off into the ground, and that the officer had told a reporter from the *Albuquerque Journal* that the mutilation victims were "apparently airlifted to a place where they are mutilated, the carcass then being returned to the pasture that night."

Quoting from the same *Albuquerque Journal* piece we had seen, Rommel told of the experiment that Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess had run on Manuel Gomez's cattle, squeezing them through a chute under an ultraviolet light and discovering fluorescent markings on some of them. He referred to Gomez as "a Dulce rancher." Closely following the narrative of the *Journal* article, Rommel explained how samples of the substance had been submitted to a private laboratory and were found to contain "a significant deposit of magnesium and potassium."

As in the *Journal* article, Rommel told of how the "Dulce law officer and his Albuquerque collaborator" had learned of the UFO incident in Taos a few days before, where a glowing object had dropped strange flakes on the roof of a pickup truck. He told of how they had gotten a sample of these flakes and sent them to their private laboratory. Rommel cited two newspaper articles about the results. One of them was by Fritz Thompson of the *Albuquerque Journal*, and stated that the UFO flakes had had concentrations of magnesium and potassium, the same elements found in the fluorescent material taken from the hides of the Dulce cattle. He then cited an article published a few weeks later in the *Rio Grande Sun*, written by Gail Olson, where she stated that the chemical composition of the Taos UFO flakes was the *same* as the chemical concentration found in the "white and mushy" liver of the Gomez animal reported as a mutilation in Dulce the previous April.

"As 1978 drew to a close," said Rommel, "cattle mutilations were very much in the headlines. Media coverage of the more spectacular New Mexico cases suggested a possible link between UFOs and livestock mutilations. . . . The possible implications of such a connection gave rise to further speculation by the press, particularly in the year that followed."

When he described New Mexico mutilations during 1979, Rommel pointed out that a mutilated cow was reported in Taos just after the new year. He mentioned another incident reported in southern New Mexico, at Malaga, near Carlsbad, where a rancher found four of his horses dead. An article in the *Rio Grande Sun* by Gail Olson had described them as "prize racehorses, each worth $10,000." Rommel stated that Olson's article said "a law officer claimed that all four horses had been mutilated." The "law officer," of course, was Gabe Valdez.

At this point Rommel noted that the strong beliefs of "the police officer from Dulce" had been a factor in the DA's interest. "As Olson points out [in the *Rio Grande Sun*]: 'He (the officer) has determined to his satisfaction that highly evolved aircraft are involved in the mutilations and that whoever is responsible has strong resources for backing.' "

Rommel pointed out that such opinions were not unanimous. The *Rio Grande Sun* had run an interview with Dr. Jim Prine, a veterinarian affiliated with Los Alamos Scientific Laboratories, who attributed the mutilations to predators and said the cattle died from blackleg, redwater, and other natural causes. In the same article, "considerable space" was devoted to interviews with "two state officials" who disagreed with Dr. Prine's findings. One official had claimed to have seen fresh carcasses in which the incisions "were similar to laser cuts." Rommel also pointed out that several newspaper articles in 1978 and 1979 had clearly expressed reporters' observations that the mutilated cattle were the result of "canine mutilators."

He explained that many newspaper accounts had described the wounds as sloppy. In particular, in one of Gail Olson's pieces in the *Rio Grande Sun* in 1978 she wrote that "though circular, the incisions were ragged and sloppy." Rommel pointed out that instead of logically assuming the sloppy wounds were the result of predator damage, the most obvious explanation, Olson suggested that they were made by amateurs who had not yet completed their "mutilation apprenticeship."

Rommel then outlined another cattle mutilation reported in Torrance County, New Mexico. The county sheriff had been assisted in his investigation by the "law officer from Dulce," our friend Gabe Valdez.

"What made this case interesting was the discovery of tripod marks inside the corral where the five-year-old cow was found dead and mutilated," Rommel wrote. He was implying that it was possible the tripod marks had been found not because they were actually there, but because Valdez, who had found similar marks near the two Gomez cows in 1976 and 1979, had been involved in the case. Rommel also pointed out that Gail Olson had stressed that someone had said the animal was killed by exsanguination, without the benefit of a veterinary report to support this.

Next, he discussed the UFO sighting made by Valdez and the Jicarilla Tribal Police in Dulce on April 8, 1979, where "a police officer in Dulce" had also seen the craft and asserted, reported in the *Albuquerque Journal*, that "he thinks [the aircraft] had to be connected with a series of 16 recent cattle mutilations in the Dulce area."

He briefly covered Senator Schmitt's Albuquerque conference in April of 1979. One theory that seemed most to excite local reporters was David Perkins's idea about environmental testing for radioactive contamination as the reason for the mutilations. Perkins's idea had received considerable coverage in the Albuquerque papers, and Gail Olson of the *Rio Grande Sun* had drawn on Perkins's theory to point out that the Dulce mutilations had occurred near the site of the Gasbuggy nuclear explosion in 1967. "To support the claim that livestock mutilations were not the work of predators and scavengers, one New Mexico law officer said he had found a mutilated cow in the branches of a tree," said Rommel.

We found this to be an astounding bit of news for several reasons. First, a mute in the branches of a tree would be positive proof that it had been dropped from the air, a shattering piece of evidence. Valdez had told us the same story. At that time, we had asked Valdez if we could see a photo of this mutilation, but he said he had not had a camera when he saw this animal. We thought it odd that Valdez had dismissed the incident this way. The fact that he had no photograph of it was almost enough evidence to assume it was a willful lie. We wondered if Rommel would unveil the truth about it later in his report.

"The general consensus of the conference," wrote Rommel, "was that livestock mutilations were indeed a problem that warranted further investigation." A few days later the DA's office received the L.E.A.A. grant, and Rommel was hired to conduct the investigation.

"In the meantime," said Rommel, "cattle mutilations continued to dominate the news, for as one reporter astutely observed, 'the cattle mutilation mystery [had] become a media event.' " Rommel noted that Senator Schmitt's conference had gotten considerable news coverage, even in the national press.

According to an article in the *Albuquerque Journal* on May 2, 1979, a Los Alamos Laboratories chemist had discovered traces of two drugs in the carcass of a bull mutilated in Torrance, New Mexico, earlier that year. The two drugs were chlorpromazine, a phenothiozine tranquilizer used in the psychiatric treatment of psychotics, and citric acid, found in oranges, grapefruit and other citrus fruits.

Chlorpromazine was inaccurately described by the newspaper as "a street drug often used to tranquilize schizophrenics," and citric acid was described as "an old-fashioned anticoagulant used by ranchers to drain the blood from an animal." He went on to note that of two lawmen interviewed by the *New Mexican*, "One officer stated that the tranquilizer was probably used to immobilize the animal while the other drug was used to 'clog the blood' so it could be more easily removed through the jugular vein." The other officer told the reporter that there were "skid marks near the carcass, indicating it might have been dropped from the air." Again, we knew who these unnamed lawmen were.

One of them was the sheriff of Torrance County; the other was Officer Gabe Valdez. It looked like Rommel was setting Valdez up for something.

"During the past few years, as I have shown," wrote Rommel, "scores of articles have been written about the New Mexico cases. These mutilations have been . . . linked with UFOs, environmental testing, biological experiments, and nuclear activities. A few individuals, however, including some very knowledgeable veterinarians, have continually maintained that the real mutilators are predators and scavengers. This theory, I soon learned, was one of the least popular."

Rude Awakenings

In the next chapter, Rommel detailed his own investigation of the same New Mexico mutilation cases reported between 1975 and 1979. First, he addressed himself to the numbers usually associated with the mutilations in New Mexico: ninety cases reported between 1975 and 1979, sixty of these being in Rio Arriba County (and associated with Gabe Valdez as investigating officer). Through information supplied by the New Mexico Livestock Board, the New Mexico State Police, and the sheriffs of every county in New Mexico, he found that indeed ninety mutilations had been reported in the state during that period, but there had been only *twenty-six* cases in Rio Arriba County.

Next, Rommel tackled the issue of predator damage. It was here that we began to fully appreciate Rommel's approach. Unlike Linda Howe and Tom Adams, he was defining his terms of evaluation and explaining exactly what kind of tests he would subject his data to. Once he had given this information to his reader, you could follow his argument step by step and either concur with it or take issue with it over specific points. He had decided to eliminate any possibility of predator damage before calling any case a "classic" mutilation, for several reasons.

"First," he said, "it is a well-known fact that wild animals and birds do feed on the carcasses of dead livestock." He named all the animals in question, many of them found in New Mexico. His sources were Donald S. Balser, the chief of predator research for the United States Department of the Interior, and Homer Pickens, the former director of the New Mexico Game and Fish Department.

Rommel's second point was that "the parts of the carcass that are allegedly removed in a 'classic' mutilation are the same ones customarily consumed by predators and scavengers." He pointed out that "most birds of prey have the ability to core the anus and remove the eyes and tongue." In support, Rommel quoted Dr. Kenneth Sager, a noted ornithologist: "the larger the animal, the more difficult it is for the scavenger to gain access to the food supply below the tough surface. [Thus they attack the] softer points of entry, namely the *eyes, anal openings,* and the *soft underbelly areas, especially the udders* of female bovines." (Italics ours)

Rommel presented statements from three veterinary pathologists agreeing with Sager and adding the tongue, the lips, the vulva, testicles, and penis to the list of organs eaten first.

Third, Rommel pointed out that since it is logical to assume that most such damage is the work of predators and scavengers, it must first be proven that this is *not* so before claiming that the damage is human-induced.

Rommel moved on to his next step. Since the parts removed by predators and scavengers are the same as those removed in a classic mutilation, "the major criterion for differentiating the two types of mutilations would be the procedures used to make the incisions.

"In a classic mutilation," Rommel said, " 'the surgery is too precise to have been done by another animal,' " according to David Perkins. Rommel emphasized that "the [cattle mutilation] literature implied that even an untrained observer can readily differentiate such incisions from the jagged, uneven cuts made by wild birds and animals.

"Is this true?" Rommel then asked. He quoted from a letter he had received from Dr. L. D. Kittner of the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Missouri: "Surprising as it may seem to the uninitiated, many of the scavengers can make [as] clean [a] cut as might be done by a surgeon with a knife."

Since a smooth, even appearance was not sufficient basis for concluding that the animal had been cut with a knife, the only sure way to tell knife work from tooth marks was by microscopic examination. He credited this information to Dr. Harry Anthony, a veterinarian at Kansas State University, and to Dr. McChesney from CSU as well.

Turning to reports of the absence of blood around the wounds of mutilated animals, Rommel pointed out that the fluid will gravitate to the down side of the carcass, and, unless this side is examined by a qualified observer, any absence of blood in the vessels or tissue of the up side of the carcass *cannot* be used to conclude that the animal has been drained of blood. He quoted veterinarian Dr. Kittner again: "It is the rule rather than the exception for these animals [predators and scavengers] to do a neat job and not leave either blood or mess at the site of the carcass."

In order to prove human action in a mutilation, it must be proven that the missing parts had been excised by a knife. And to prove this, there had to be a microscopic examination of the tissue. Anything else was wide open to speculation—with one exception. Rommel pointed out that, since birds and predators will only damage the upward, exposed side of a carcass, the discovery of mutilation damage on the ground side would be "suggestive of human causation." If the animals were indeed airlifted, mutilated, and then dropped back to earth, it was statistically necessary that a fair number of carcasses would land with the mutilated portions next to the ground.

"If neither of these two criteria are met," Rommel concluded, "then predator/scavenger damage must be assumed. Such an assumption is even more likely in those cases in which bird tracks, animal prints, feathers, fur, animal defecation, or bird droppings have been found near the carcass."

Rommel then encapsulated his findings so far. First, not one of the ninety-six cases reported in New Mexico could be classified as a "classic" (human-caused) mutilation, according to the standards he had just set up. Rommel then walked through all the ninety-six reported cases from 1975 through 1979 and revealed their final statuses after investigation. They broke down this way:

Sixty-nine (seventy-seven percent) could be explained, at least partly, using the available evidence and reports; an additional twenty-eight "mutilations" were associated with scavenger activity; in nineteen of the cases, there was not enough evidence to infer scavenger damage, but there had been enough information, Rommel said, to rule out calling them "classic mutilations" because either the animal's death was known to be from some natural cause or routine injury, or the carcass was too decomposed to make any assessment.

"In short, the term 'classic mutilation' and all that it infers [sic] cannot be applied, with any justification, to the 69 cases just discussed. To do so would require a wild imagination coupled with an ability to totally disregard all the facts." Regarding the remaining twenty-one cases, "the evidence presented was not sufficient to determine the cause of death or to assess the nature of the mutilations."

This left approximately twenty-three percent of the New Mexico cases undetermined due to lack of evidence. This statement, we knew, could be handled two ways. One could admire Rommel for adhering to his own standards and not trying to trump up explanations. The other reading could be made by a diehard mutology buff: twenty-three percent of the New Mexico cases were open to classification as "classic mutilations." Of course, anyone who took this stand would carry the burden of *proving* that these cases were indeed classics.

In the next section of the report Rommel evaluated several of the earlier New Mexico cases in detail. He began by addressing himself to some of the more bizarre factors. He acknowledged that "it may even seem to you that I am ignoring some rather spectacular pieces of evidence—such as the discovery of animals with broken bones and clamp marks.

" 'Doesn't this indicate these animals have been airlifted?' you may ask," he wrote. " 'And, hasn't it been proved that the victims are deliberately chosen? And what about the discovery of drugs in the mutilated bull? Wouldn't this accumulated mass of evidence rule out the predator/scavenger theory?' "

"These are reasonable, logical questions," he said, "the kind of questions and doubts that give rise to much of the controversy that surrounds the entire subject. But logical questions call for logical answers—answers that will become very apparent in this section, as I examine in greater detail the evidence supporting the most publicized theory in New Mexico, that a highly sophisticated organization is behind these 'classic' mutilations." Rommel noted that this theory had been expounded through the *Albuquer-*

que Journal, the *Rio Grande Sun*, and even in "official reports proclaiming experimentation to be the probable reason for this bizarre activity."

The "official reports" he was referring to were the police reports of Officer Gabe Valdez.

"Much of the evidence to support this theory stems from incidents investigated in the Dulce area," (there was no doubt that Valdez's number had come up now) "although other cases have been reported elsewhere in the state, particularly the alleged mutilation of four racehorses at Malaga, and the mutilated bull in Torrance County, are offered as further proof," said Rommel.

Rommel had read both the newspaper accounts of these incidents and the official reports on each case. "Much to my surprise, I found the material contained in some of these reports to be as sensational as the news stories covering the same events," he said.

Rommel explained that he would examine in detail all the evidence used to support the secret experimentation theory, including "the discovery of unusual tracks, broken legs, clamp marks, radiation at the scene, UFO sightings, drugs in some animals, and the deliberate selection of the healthiest and best livestock."

Again, he stressed that evidence cited in official and unofficial reports, "especially those from Dulce," suggests that advanced aircraft are involved in the mutilations. He mentioned the tripod-like marks found at some of the scenes, noting that these marks had been given "considerable recognition" in *UFO Report*.

He accurately described how the report said that when the owner of the animal returned the next day, he found a fresh set of tripod indentations over the tire tracks made by his car, also leading to the mutilated carcass. "The [police] report then makes the rather astonishing statement that 'the tripod marks had returned and removed the left ear,'" wrote Rommel.

Rommel then moved to the mutilation reports of 1978. He condensed Valdez's April 24, 1978, report on the Gomez bull, again without mentioning any names. He pointed out that the official report describes the discovery of "four-inch round footprints 100 feet north of the slain animal," and he caught Valdez's conclusion that the object had to be extremely heavy, since the ground was too hard even to take much of a track from the tires of his police cruiser. "He [Valdez] theorizes as to what caused these marks, stating 'These four-inch round footprints led to the animal and back 100 feet where they apparently returned to a hovering aircraft.'"

Rommel's implication was clear. Valdez had given no inkling of how he established that the prints were made by any kind of device, yet he had entered it into the report. He had said nothing about evidence of a hovering aircraft, yet he had officially stated that the marks returned to such a craft. In a criminal case, unverified statements like this could send a human being to jail.

Besides the mutilation reported in Dulce on May 11, 1978, another Gomez cow, there was only one other New Mexico case where tripod marks had been reported, this one outside the Dulce area, in Torrance County. These tripod marks were reported in an article in the *New Mexican*.

The case was investigated by the county sheriff and, said Rommel, "it is interesting to note that he was assisted by the same law officer who had investigated the Dulce 'tripod mark' cases." Rommel had contacted both the police and sheriff's offices. As of February 1980, he could locate no official reports of the incident.

"It is perhaps worthy of note," Rommel said, "that all four 'tripod mark' cases were investigated by the same officer." That was all, but it was enough. Perhaps Gabe Valdez could not tell a "tripod mark" from a few holes in the ground.

Rommel noted something else which we had completely failed to see when we had read Valdez's reports: the sizable lapse of time between the dates of the incidents and the dates on which the police reports had been officially submitted. We checked this. In each case, two to six months had elapsed. Rommel's implication was plain. He explained that when he was an FBI agent he was required to dictate the results of any interview to be used as testimony within five days. "The rationale for this requirement," he explained, "which was established to comply with the Jenks decision of the Supreme Court, was to insure sufficient recall. In regard to these Dulce incidents," he said, "one wonders how reliable the officer's memory would be several months after the investigation."

He went on to note that "In view of the tremendous significance which the officer has attached to these marks, his delay in filing the reports is curious. It would seem that if he really thought the marks were made by a strange flying aircraft, he would have reported the discovery immediately as one of the discoveries of the century."

Here was another unavoidable point, we thought. It *was* strange. Rommel did give Valdez credit for having tests performed on substances found at the site. The oily material, however, that he said he found in the tripod marks, and which he had submitted to the State Police lab for analysis, had, according to the lab's report, simply not been present in the sample they received.

He then dealt with the radiation reading taken at the site. "The officer also summoned a 'retired scientist' to the scene to make radiation tests. His findings revealed that the radiation level around the tripod marks was twice that of a normal reading," said Rommel.

"While this finding seems suggestive, it is scientifically invalid since there is no indication of how the tests were conducted and whether or not a background reading was taken—which would have been necessary to determine whether the tripod readings were higher than normal," Rommel said. There was no arguing with his logic. A simple Geiger counter reading is absolutely worthless without a knowledge of what the background radiation level is for a given area. Neither Burgess nor Valdez had indicated that the tests had been conducted properly.

Rommel next discussed the "alleged discovery of animals with clamp marks and broken bones," another basis for the belief that aircraft were involved in the mutilations. "Again," he emphasized, "most of these incidents were reported in the Dulce area."

Rommel then mentioned Valdez's report on the mutilated animal found May 11, 1978. He quoted from the report which read "left front and rear legs were pulled out of their sockets, apparently from the weight of the cow which indicates it was lifted and dropped to the ground." He also cited another case investigated by Valdez on May 28, 1978, in which "the officer" reported that the " 'left front leg and left rear leg were broken, which indicates that [the] animals were lifted by their extremities.' "

Next, Rommel recalled that "this officer" had stated at the closed afternoon session of Senator Schmitt's Albuquerque conference that he had seen the carcass of a 600-pound mutilated cow in the branches of a tree, and that this indicated to him the animal had been dropped from the air. This story was really bothering us by now. We hoped Rommel would offer an explanation for it.

"Last February I questioned the officer about this incident," Rommel wrote. "He admitted to me that the animal was not actually in the tree but was found at its base.

"This change of location is of major significance in that it not only totally undermines the theory the animal was dropped from the air, but also immediately suggests the cow was probably killed by lightning, one of the most common causes of livestock deaths. In addition, this admission seriously undermines the credibility of all the officer's previous statements."

Well, this was why Valdez had no photographs of this spectacular incident when we requested one. The tale was a lie, a fish story. As much as we liked Valdez, he was not coming off at all well in the Rommel Report, and we had yet to find a place where Rommel had darkened his credibility without a good reason.

Rommel then analyzed the report Valdez had written on the animal investigated on June 14, 1978. He noted that the report said the animal's " 'left front and left rear legs were broken, and that there were visible clamp marks on the lower left rear leg.'

"The question arises," asked Rommel, "as to how the officer determined the bones were broken, since there is no indication that these animals were examined by trained veterinarians."

Here was yet another point impossible to sidestep: unless a bone break is extremely severe and the splintered ends are protruding from the skin, or the limb is bent at an impossible angle, it is difficult even in a human to tell the difference between a break, a sprain, or ligament damage. The only sure test is an X-ray.

Valdez could at least have covered himself by taking photographs of the broken limbs to back up his conclusions. He had also not written the reports until months after the incidents occurred. Had he decided months later, after conversations with men like Tex Graves from Logan County, UFO buffs like Howard Burgess, and mutologists like David Perkins and Tom Adams, that the animals he had seen so long before had had broken legs? Had he been caught up in the seductive paranoia of the cattle mutilation phenomenon. It certainly looked that way.

Next, Rommel went on to discuss the clamp marks, and how they were no kind of evidence that the animals had been shackled and lifted into the air. Rommel's point was that without the aid of a professional pathologist it was extremely irrational to conclude that seeming clamp marks, bruises on an animal's brisket, and like changes after death meant the beasts had been airlifted or dropped.

He then tackled the UFO sightings which often accompanied mutilation reports, "especially those occurring in the Dulce area." Speaking about Valdez's police reports again, he said, "I found that a number of them do mention UFO sightings, as though this would explain the tripod tracks, clamp marks, and broken bones." He noted how the press had often reported UFO sightings in the same articles with cattle mutilations, implicitly or explicitly linking them together, specifically referring to an article written by Howard Burgess and his wife Lovola. This was the piece entitled "Close Encounter at the Old Corral," which had appeared in *True UFOs and Outer Space Quarterly* in 1979.

The article said that on the night in July 1978, when Burgess and Valdez had driven Manuel Gomez's cattle through a chute under ultraviolet lights and found fluorescent markings on some of them, Burgess had been approached by the chief of the Jicarilla Apache Tribal Police. According to Burgess, the chief had asked him, "Did you see the orange light moving around in the sky a while ago? It was the kind that always shows up when there's a mutilation. Maybe they're watching you tonight." Rommel said that he interviewed the chief about the incident at Senator Schmitt's conference.

"The chief testified emphatically that he had never seen these lights and personally didn't believe in UFOs," Rommel wrote.

He went on to discuss the UFO flakes collected from the top of the pickup truck at Taos.

"I contacted the 'retired scientist' [Howard Burgess] who had had the two substances analyzed," said Rommel. He asked Burgess to give him a sample of the UFO flakes for analysis by the FBI lab. He sent them to the FBI laboratory in Washington, D.C., which subsequently identified them as "white enamel paint typical of an acrylic/latex emulsion-type exterior house paint." To be fair, Rommel then contacted the "retired scientist" and suggested that he submit the remaining flakes to the laboratory of his choice to confirm or refute the FBI lab's findings.

"As of June 12, 1980," Rommel said, "he advised me that he has not done so."

Why would Burgess back off on a chance to vindicate himself?

"The most spectacular UFO sightings in New Mexico, judging from media coverage, have occurred at times when no cattle mutilations were reported," Rommel concluded.

He began to pick up steam. He talked about the glowing tombstone in the Gomez family cemetery, noting that it is mentioned in Howard and Lovola Burgess's article.

This was extremely interesting to us, because it showed that apparently Burgess changed his story to suit his moods and his audience. In an article for a UFO magazine, he implied that the glowing stone might be a marker for some night-flying aircraft, possibly a UFO. However, when we met him in Albuquerque, he assured us that Valdez had told him it was a reflection from a utility light.

Rommel then referred to a recent investigation of the stone conducted by several law enforcement officers. "Two officials later told me, in separate accounts, that when they walked between the stone and [a nearby light source], the third officer reported that the marker no longer glowed." Why, then, had Valdez told us that when he turned off all the outdoor lights in Dulce the stone continued to glow?

Returning to Valdez's reports, still without mentioning his name, Rommel evaluated three different conclusions written into the reports. One from the report dated June 13, 1976, states that the writer (Valdez) has ruled out Satan-worshippers and predators as the cause of mutilations because of expertise and preciseness, and because of the cost involved in conducting such a sophisticated and secret operation. Another quote was from the report of April 24, 1979, that "One had to admit that whoever is responsible for the mutilations is very well organized with boundless technology and financing secrecy." The third, from the report of June 14, 1978, advanced Valdez's theory that "whoever is conducting the mutilations is operating from a well-equipped undercover van, which carries the mysterious aircraft."

"Since these are official reports," Rommel pointed out, "one would expect some incriminating evidence to be cited to support these statements. None is offered. . . ." Valdez had been one of our prime sources. As far as we could see right now, his information was virtually worthless.

Rommel then pointed out that similar evidence-less assertions had been made in the press, notably in the article by Gail Olson of the *Rio Grande Sun*.

Returning in detail to the Torrance mutilations, Rommel explained how he had obtained copies of the official report on the incident prepared by Inspector A. J. Gibbs of the New Mexico Livestock Board. "Although the media had classified this incident as a 'classic' mutilation, Gibbs's report states that there were cuts and scratches over most of the animal's body, including its neck and between the hind legs. The stomach had been ripped open, and there were jagged edges on the head where the ear had been removed. Gibbs later informed me that the animal had been culled from the rest of the herd prior to sale because it was sickly.

"The report also states that three sets of dog tracks were found leading from the carcass. . . . In addition, small patches of black hair were noted near the animal, and the cuts and scratches were said to resemble teeth marks. It is difficult to understand how anyone who has read Gibbs's report could possibly classify this case of obvious predator-scavenger damage as a classic mutilation."

He had interviewed Gibbs, and had been told that the animal's owner had been having "so much trouble with dogs that he had personally warned their owners that he would kill any dogs found on his property. Gibbs also mentioned that some of the rancher's animals had had their ears chewed off while still alive."

Rommel noted that despite all this information the *New Mexican* had carried an article about the incident in which it stated that "skid marks [were found] near the bull's carcass, indicating it might have been dropped from the air." Incidentally, a page earlier, Rommel had said that when he consulted Gibbs's report he learned that the animal was not a bull, but a black steer. It was too bad that whoever wrote the articles had not been professional enough to read Gibbs's report before classifying the Torrance steer as a classic mutilation. They had not even identified the sex of the animal correctly.

Tracing the reports of drugs found in the carcass of the steer, Rommel went to an article published in the January 27, 1980, issue of the *Chicago Tribune*. It concerned a local Illinois mutilation report, and touched on cases in Canada, Iowa, and New Mexico. The concluding paragraph featured Gabe Valdez stating that "Tests of blood samples from one of his cases showed *large amounts* of a powerful tranquilizer and a drug that prevents blood from clotting." (Italics ours)

Rommel contacted Dale Spall, the analytical chemist at Los Alamos Laboratories who had performed the tests on the Torrance steer. Spall said he had found only a *trace* of chlorpromazine, not a large amount. Spall defined "trace" as an amount "not significant enough to have affected the animal." Spall also told Rommel he had found large amounts of a substance called naphthalene in its blood, indicating that it had been on hormone feed. Regarding the citric acid, the drug the newspapers had reported to be an anticoagulant, Spall said his initial findings had indicated an above-normal level of this, but that through further testing he had determined that the level in the steer's blood was normal. Spall also pointed out that citric acid occurs normally in the blood and tissues of all mammals.

Rommel then contacted a major drug company, whose spokesman told him that chlorpromazine was routinely used to tranquilize animals, and, more significantly, that it metabolized very slowly and could leave traces in the blood for several weeks or longer, depending on the animal's size and other factors.

Dr. Dan Upson, a professor of pharmacology at Kansas State University, had told Rommel that the drug was easy for ranchers to obtain for tranquilizing sick animals that became unmanageable. The animal's owner told Rommel that he felt the drug could have gotten into the animal through its feed.

With such clear evidence available, why had Valdez told the *Chicago Tribune* that there were large amounts of tranquilizer in the animal's blood? Along with all the other holes Rommel had illuminated in Valdez's reports, this one did nothing to make him look any better.

Rommel then interviewed Inspector Gibbs, who told him that the owner had confirmed that the animal had been on medicated feed, and had probably not mentioned it to Rommel because he had been extremely upset about the way the investigating officers (Valdez among them) had sensationalized the case. He told Gibbs, Rommel wrote, that he was "sorry he ever reported it."

Regarding the case of a New Mexico mutilation reported to have had atropine in its blood, Rommel noted that this was mentioned in a June 12, 1976, police report, another one of Valdez's. The report did not specify which animal had been found to contain the drug. The report referred to atropine as a tranquilizer. As Rommel pointed out, atropine is *not* a tranquilizer, but an alkaloid, and is related to belladonna, or deadly nightshade. It is a poison, and grows freely all over the country and in New Mexico. This made it plain that the "mutilated" animal with atropine in its blood had probably died from eating poison plants.

"In summary," he stated, to the contrary, "all evidence to date confirms that the drugs found in the animals are the result of either . . . medication administered by a veterinarian and/or a rancher, substances acquired through an animal's feed, substances found in plants growing in the field, or dangerous chemicals used in the ranching operation.''

Then Rommel embraced the biggest question of all: if these mutilations are being perpetrated by some organized group, why? He first tackled the claim that this theory was upheld by the selection for mutilation of the biggest and healthiest animals in a herd. For an example, he explored the quadruple mutilation case reported at Malaga, New Mexico, on January 22, 1979, of four prize-racehorses. Gail Olson of the *Rio Grande Sun* had stated that the animals were each valued at $10,000. Checking a copy of her article, we found that she had been given this information by Officer Gabe Valdez.

Rommel checked with the New Mexico Livestock Board. According to the board, only three of the four horses were mutilated. Each had been missing its upper eyelids and the upper tips of its ears. In one horse the genital area had been removed.

''It is important to note,'' said Rommel, ''that the investigating officer concluded there was nothing mysterious about this damage, which he attributed to coyotes.''

The next subject on Rommel's list was the fluorescent material found on the hides of the Gomez animals by Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess. Rommel submitted the results of the tests on the material performed by Dr. Schoenfeld to Dr. Dale Spall. Spall said that concentration of such elements can vary by as much as a factor of ten between individual animals depending on diet, and other influences. A second chemist looked at the test results and pronounced them within normal limits. Rommel's closing comment was this:

''Not only was the substance on the hides not identified . . . but also none of the supposedly marked animals were ever mutilated, as far as I could determine.

''If livestock mutilations represent some type of experimentation, as many believe, the next question is 'What is being tested?' '' He quoted from one of Gabe Valdez's reports that ''investigation has revealed . . . the object of the mutilations is the lymph node system.' '' Rommel noted that later in the report ''the investigating officer'' theorizes about the experimental use of vitamin B-12, and mentions that he is studying germ warfare testing. Rommel then quoted from Howard and Lovola Burgess's 1979 article from *True UFO and Outer Space Quarterly:*

'' 'In these animals the same parts of the lymphatic and digestive tract are removed from each animal in a very precise and bloodless operation. The operation is generally performed in the air and the dead animal dropped.' ''

What assurance! Burgess wrote as if he knew all these things to be true. And for support he could point to the official police reports of Officer Gabe Valdez. The relationship was perfectly circular, and therefore led exactly nowhere. Through Rommel's criticism and our knowledge of the close relationship between Burgess and Valdez, it was now quite clear that almost all the conclusions Valdez had recklessly included in his official reports were parroted snippets of Howard Burgess's theories.

Probably, when Burgess—seemingly educated, seemingly versed in the sciences, implying that he held all kinds of top-secret clearances from Sandia Laboratories—first showed up in Dulce in 1976 lugging his Geiger counter, Valdez figured he had finally met an expert. So much the better that the man had a deep interest in cattle mutilations and didn't laugh at UFO sightings. Burgess must have looked like a powerful, helpful ally.

In fact, Burgess was seen in a similar light by many of the mutologists. David Perkins had been the first to characterize Burgess as a ''retired scientist'' in his *Boulder Monthly* article in 1979. Peter Jordan sometimes spoke of Burgess as if he were Edward Teller, or as if Howard's interest in cattle mutilations was analogous to Nobel prize-winner Linus Pauling's controversial pronouncements about the value of vitamin C a few years back. Burgess, we now saw, was a kind of welterweight scientific guru to the mutologists. The whole thing was part of a closed system, self-referential, solipsistic, which allowed no fresh information to enter unless it was properly polarized to support the prevailing attitude of mystery, conspiracy, weirdness, and/or UFOs and space aliens. Rommel's criticism of Valdez and Burgess was now allowing us to see how these same factors operated throughout the mutology network.

David Perkins quoted Tom Adams, Tom Adams quoted Linda Howe, Linda Howe referred to Dr. Leo Sprinkle, Sprinkle tossed the ball back to Perkins. None of their references ever reached anyone outside the mutology subculture, except in a derogatory way. There were still, however, too many people outside the network who were convinced, and the mutilations had cropped up in too many states with the same effects each time. We reminded ourselves that all Rommel was doing was developing a workable, clearheaded way to analyze the incidents.

Rommel next examined the evidence that the mutilations were the result of secret experimentation focusing on the lymph system. This evidence consisted mainly of the observation that the tongue and lips were often taken from mutilated animals.

"However," he said, "as I noted previously, these are the parts that are commonly eaten by predators and scavengers." If you hooked this point up with the unsupported lymph node theory presented by Burgess and Valdez, among others, there really was no reason to take it seriously.

Regarding the claims about radiation at mutilation sites, Rommel mentioned that in "both official reports and newspapers" it had been claimed that people who visited mutilation sites had complained of nausea and headaches. "I do not doubt this [the nausea and headaches] in the least," wrote Rommel, "but without further evidence, it is totally unwarranted to attribute this to 'radiation poisoning.' In fact," he said, "unless you are used to working with dead animals it would be more unusual if you didn't feel nauseated in the presence of a rotting carcass."

Rommel brought up another observation on which theories of biological experimentation had been predicated, "the discovery of certain abnormalities in the carcasses of mutilated animals." The first of these was the discovery of pinkish blood in one of the mutilated Gomez animals found in 1978.

Rommel also pointed out that similar observations are made in subsequent reports by this "investigating officer." "Again, these observations are not supported by any concrete evidence," said Rommel.

"The results of tests performed on the organs of mutilated animals, particularly the liver, are also used to support the 'biological experimentation' theory," Rommel continued. Here, he marched through the case of the liver tissue sample taken by Gabe Valdez from the Dulce bull found mutilated on April 24, 1978.

Rommel reminded his readers that Gail Olson of the *Rio Grande Sun* had "claimed that the chemical components of the bull's liver were the same as those found in both the Taos UFO and Dulce [fluorescent] cowhide samples. This, according to the article, suggests a link between mutilations and UFOs." He told of how the "retired scientist" [Burgess], appearing on Channel Four in Albuquerque on August 23, 1979, had stated that the mutilated bull's liver contained virtually no copper, in comparison to a healthy control liver sample from a supermarket, and that this had given him the impression that it may have had a very heavy dose of microwave radiation.

This same individual had written a letter to Rommel on September 28, 1979, explaining more completely his ideas about radiation and low copper in the bull's liver.

This was a slightly more detailed version of the radiation/copper loss theory Burgess had given us in the bar of the Howard Johnson's a few months earlier. Rommel had submitted Burgess's letter to Dr. G. S. Smith, a professor of animal nutrition at New Mexico State University. "It sounds preposterous to me," Smith said. In fact, Dr. Smith added a comment to his evaluation:

". . . Most of the statements in the letter of September 28, 1979, add up to one overriding conclusion: [Burgess] is (as he stated) not a biologist. He obviously doesn't know a whole lot about the metabolism of trace elements in animals. I don't know what it is that he has expertise in; but I'm skeptical about his speculation on mobilization of copper from cattle livers. The whole tone of his letter suggests to me 'long on theory and short on facts.' "

Pushing to cover all the exits, Rommel then elicited an opinion on the whole experiment from Dr. Dale Spall at Los Alamos Laboratories. Spall told Rommel that in his opinion, " 'the whole exercise was not done well enough or completely enough to make any valid comparison.' " He explained that using a supermarket liver for an experimental control was pointless, and that the only kind of valid control would be a liver from another animal from the same herd, which had followed the same grazing habits and feeding history as the mutilated bull.

Tempting as it was simply to accept the opinion of Rommel's Dr. G. S. Smith that Howard Burgess's radiation/copper loss theory was preposterous, we decided to check further into it, and were directed to *Veterinary Medicine: A Textbook of the Diseases of Cattle, Sheep, Pigs, and Horses,* by Doctors D. C. Blood, J. A. Henderson, and O. M. Radostits, with Drs. J. H. Arundel and C. C. Gay, *the* basic text on animal diseases, used as a reference by veterinarians all over the world.

We then went to the results of the Schoenfeld Laboratory analysis performed on the liver of the Gomez bull in question at the request of Valdez and Burgess. The first thing we noticed was that the lab results were expressed in extremely questionable measurement units. The mineral concentrations in the control liver sample were presented in terms of absolute weight, milligrams and micrograms. This was a bad sign. *Veterinary Medicine,* indeed medical diagnostic texts for humans as well, always deal with trace substances in terms of *relative* concentration, how many parts per million (PPM), or how many milligrams or micrograms *per gram* or *per kilogram* there are of a given substance. (A milligram is one thousandth of a gram, and a microgram is one thousandth of a milligram, or one millionth of a gram.)

Further, the comparable concentrations of the same elements in the mutilated bull's liver were expressed only as *percentages* of the amounts found in the control liver. This kind of measurement was virtually meaningless as well, since it not only did not give the mineral concentrations in PPM, or weight per gram or kilogram, it gave no basis for establishing what was within normal limits and what was not.

There was no way to tell if the level in the mutilated bull's liver was abnormally low, or if the level of copper in the control liver was abnormally *high,* since the amounts of trace elements vary widely depending on the specific metabolism of the animal, the land it was grazed on, and many other factors. Either level could be considered normal under the proper conditions. Yet Burgess had stated that the copper level in the mutilated bull's liver was abnormally low. Valdez had bought this judgment, and Gail Olson had put it into her *Rio Grande Sun* article.

The next thing we noticed about the lab reading on the liver samples was that Valdez had made a gross error when he included them in his police report. He had said that the mutilated bull's liver "contained no copper, and four times the amount of phosphorus, zinc, and potassium." Looking at the lab report, we saw that everything he had said was incorrect. The liver contained 287 micrograms of copper, and approximately *three* times the control amount of potassium, *iron,* and *sodium.* The levels of phosphorus and zinc in the mutilated bull's liver were both *less than half* the levels in the control.

We then went to *Veterinary Medicine* and found that copper deficiency is a common cause of disease and cattle loss all over the world. It is responsible for something called "falling disease" in adult cattle, in which they die suddenly of acute heart failure, keeling over instantly with *no signs of struggle.*

What is critical in an animal is *not* the *absolute* amount of copper or molybdenum in its tissues, but the *ratio* between these elements in the liver and other organs. *Veterinary Medicine* states that the healthy ratio of copper to molybdenum in the liver should be at least two to one or greater, actually four to one for guaranteed avoidance of this kind of secondary copper deficiency.

We looked to the Schoenfeld lab report for the molybdenum level in the mutilated bull's liver—thirty-six percent of the level in the control, a meaningless number. However, this translated into approximately 68 micrograms of molybdenum. There were 287 micrograms of copper in the mutilated bull's liver, or *almost exactly four times the amount of copper as the amount of molybdenum,* which was the level prescribed by *Veterinary Medicine* as a *perfectly healthy ratio.* The animal could not possibly have had a copper breakdown induced by radiation.

But what about the pinkish, watery blood? And what about the elevated levels of potassium, iron, and sodium, and the severe lack of cobalt? We continued looking.

Under "Poisoning by Organic Iron Compounds" we found that one of the effects of iron poisoning is an *elevated level of potassium in the blood,* which causes heart failure and instant death, with *no signs of struggle.* Both the iron level and the potassium level in the mutilated bull's liver were more than three times higher than the level of those elements in the control sample. It was entirely possible that the elevated potassium level may have been due to an elevated iron concentration due to iron poisoning. Burgess and Valdez had not noticed this elevation in the iron concentration of the liver: no one had asked Manuel Gomez if he had perhaps given the bull a shot of vitamins with an iron complex, the usual source of iron poisoning in cattle, not long before the bull keeled over dead. Here was another possible cause not only of the animal's death, but of the true excess found in the liver tissue.

Following the excess of sodium found in the liver, we referred to the listing under "Sodium Chloride Poisoning." Sodium chloride is simple table salt: it is added to cattle feed and provided for cattle in open salt licks. We found that there are many ways for a cow to get an overdose of sodium chloride; it can even come from drinking well water with a high salt level. We also found that cattle can succumb to sodium chloride poisoning even when they receive a safe level of the substance in their diet, if their water intake is temporarily restricted. In this case sodium builds up in the tissues while the water intake is cut off. When the animal again gets access to unlimited drinking water, the rapid influx of water engorges the tissues to establish a normal water/salt balance, and certain tissues, especially the brain, can swell, killing the animal. In a necropsy, *elevated levels of sodium are found in the liver,* just as in the Gomez bull.

Veterinary Medicine specifies that sodium levels above 150 milligrams per deciliter in the liver indicate sodium chloride poisoning. The liver of the mutilated Gomez bull contained approximately 215 milligrams of sodium. Even more interesting, the book points out that in animals dead from salt poisoning, "the blood appears to be *thinner than normal*." This, of course, could have accounted for the watery, pinkish condition of the blood in the mutilated Gomez bull.

We continued our scan, now seeking the meaning of the low level of cobalt in the mutilated bull's liver analysis.

Cobalt deficiency is of major importance in cattle raising areas of the United States, and it is a common condition among cattle. Bulls are particularly susceptible. Incidence of the disease is highest in the spring, because the grasses that grow at that time of year have a low amount of the element, and the Gomez bull was found dead in April. Necropsy findings often show "very high iron levels in the liver," and the Gomez bull's liver analysis showed exactly this. In addition, Blood and Henderson specify that animals with cobalt deficiency are anemic, their blood is *thin, watery, and pinkish,* like the blood found in the Gomez bull, and that the animal will often develop what is known as *pica*. Pica is defined as the eating of materials other than normal food due to dietary deficiency. This means that an animal with a cobalt or other dietary deficiency will often swallow anything, including bits of metal, wire, nails, bones and other materials that can puncture its intestines or other organs, causing it to die quickly, with no signs of struggle, from internal bleeding. Ranchers refer to pica as "hardware disease." It is an extremely common cause of death among cattle. Neither Valdez, Burgess, nor Gail Olson had checked to see if hardware was what killed the Gomez bull.

With some expert help from Dr. Blood and his colleagues, we had just discovered a great deal more than even Rommel had.

The main point was this: if one did even the most minor research, it was easy to see that there was no need for an extreme and highly paranoid theory like Burgess's radiation theory to explain the condition of the Gomez bull. Anyone with any familiarity with scientific procedure, and we knew that Burgess had at least some of this, would have leafed through more reasonable causes before applying the radiation concept. Burgess had not only not done this, he had gone straight to the press with his bogus concept. His motive had to be to gain publicity. Yet the man constantly stated to us, "I have nothing to prove."

We had also learned some very disturbing things about our friend Officer Gabe Valdez. First, as Rommel had pointed out, he was given to making firm conclusions in his official reports without supplying any evidence to back them up. Second, he had obviously been powerfully influenced by the notions of Howard Burgess, since almost all of his assertions about air-dropped cattle, radiation, and biological experimentation were parrotings of Burgess's ideas. Third, his judgment in these matters was extremely poor, since he had accepted everything Burgess had to say without realizing that most of it was speculative and unsupportable. Fourth, it seemed that Gabe could not even read a written report and accurately transfer its contents to one of his police reports.

Rommel then quickly tackled the last of the evidence supporting the biological experimentation theory, "the alleged discovery of mutilated livestock in areas characterized by nuclear activity." He pointed out that of the ninety mutilations reported in New Mexico through May of 1979, only seven had been in the Dulce area, closest to Gasbuggy, and that this region itself was more than twenty-five miles from the blast location.

He moved on next to grapple with the mineral prospecting theory as an explanation for cattle mutilations.

"This theory was discussed by an individual, presumably a scientist, on a television program narrated by Loren Nancarrow, which appeared August 23, 1979, on Channel 4 [in Albuquerque]," he said.

The person was none other than Howard Burgess, speaking on the same TV show Rommel had referred to a few pages earlier. Quoting from a transcript of the show, Rommel explained how the "alleged scientist" had said that, although he had heard of no research in which animal tissues were analyzed for rare mineral traces, the fact that animals can accumulate such elements meant to him that the explanation was theoretically possible.

To explore this theory, Rommel had contacted "experts from several different fields."

"They all agreed that the theory was 'ridiculous' to quote the term used by one engineer," he said. He spoke with a Dr.

Franklin M. Orr, senior engineer for the Petroleum Recovery Research Center at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. Orr told him that oil and gas deposits in New Mexico exist at a depth of 3,000 to 5,000 feet below the surface of the ground, and that therefore no traces of the materials could enter plant life, thereby entering animal tissues. Orr also said that the more sophisticated seismic and geological techniques of prospecting would be easier and more accurate than analyzing animal tissues.

Rommel was told by Mr. G. R. Griswold, president of Chapman, Wood and Griswold, Inc., mining engineers and geologists, that analyzing animal tissues for such mineral traces in order to pinpoint the locations of ore deposits "would be most difficult, if not impossible. . . . An animal would graze over thousands of acres in its lifespan, and pinpointing the source area of trace minerals found in animal tissue would be next to impossible." He also told Rommel that this sort of prospecting " 'would be very inefficient compared to geochemistry, geophysics, and applied geology.' "

With these expert opinions, Rommel dispensed with the notion that cattle mutilations are part of a clandestine mineral prospecting operation.

Rommel continued his line of inquiry. "If livestock are being mutilated for experimental purposes," he wrote, "the next logical question is 'who are [sic] performing these tests?' Some of the more vocal investigators," he said, "claim that the government is behind both these incidents. The strongest supporting argument for this theory is that 'anything this big and this sophisticated has to be done by the government.'

"It is never explained why the government would not purchase its own animals or why after lifting and carrying them off to a place of surgery, the government would risk further detection by returning them to the area of discovery," Rommel wrote.

"In short," wrote Rommel, "the government conspiracy theory, though one of the most highly publicized theories in New Mexico has not a shred of evidence to support it." He went on to say the same thing Senator Schmitt had said to Linda Howe when she had interviewed him for "Strange Harvest": he seriously doubted the ability of the government to maintain that kind of secret for so long a time without a leak developing somewhere.

To cap his dismissal, he addressed one of the most frequently heard statements made by mutilation buffs in support of a human or extraterrestrial cause for the mutilations.

"During the course of my investigation, I soon learned that many of the people who stress the bizarre nature of livestock mutilations periodically resort to the following cliche when all else fails: 'I've been a rancher all my life and I've never seen a predator remove organs with such precision.' Many people are under the impression that a rancher would certainly know the difference between a 'mutilation' and a carcass damaged by scavengers. This I learned, was simply not true—a fact dramatically illustrated in the incidents I investigated myself.

"In each case, the rancher summoned me to the scene, believing that there was something peculiar about the damage done to the carcass of their animal that required further investigation. In each case, as I demonstrate in the following chapter, the damage was clearly done by predators or scavengers. Moreover, *when brought to their attention, several ranchers agreed with me that the cuts on the carcasses were actually quite jagged and rough. When asked why they requested an investigation, they usually replied that they had read about livestock mutilations in the paper and wanted to make sure that this wasn't one of them.*" (Italics ours)

"As I have shown," he said, "there is simply no concrete evidence to support the theory that mutilations are being conducted as experiments by highly skilled individuals using precision instruments. The facts cited to support this belief are at best questionable, and in many cases involve incredible flights of fantasy, as in the . . . tests whose findings supposedly established a link between mutilations, UFOs, and high levels of radiation."

Reach Exceeding Grasp

It was time to stop and draw a breath. Rommel had certainly added some new dimensions to the cattle mutilation phenomenon.

True, Rommel was out for blood; he saw Valdez, Burgess, and Gail Olson as dangerous incompetents who had blown a non-event into a wild and possibly dangerous public furor. He wanted to discredit them, show them up for what they were. And all his observations about their business of mystifying the reported cattle mutilations, burying them under a heap of silly ideas, grandiosely wrong surmises, and unsystematic thought, were quite accurate.

But, despite his painfully acute criticisms of Burgess, Valdez, and Olson, Rommel was not content merely to illuminate the circumstances that caused this circus of ill-thought-out conspiracy charges, newspaper hysteria, unfounded claims, and grossly inaccurate police work: he wanted to discredit once and for all the entire cattle mutilation phenomenon, from its inception in the late Sixties and early Seventies.

It was here that, although shedding light on the phenomenon, he reached beyond his limits. He, too, was capable of varnishing the truth, overzealous thinking, and distortion.

Perhaps this was not all Rommel's fault. Dr. Nancy Owen had ghost-written the report, and had likely freely mixed her own impressions and information or misinformation with Rommel's own meticulous work.

The next and last chapter of the report was entitled "Evaluation of Mutilations From Other States." It was a comprehensive historical tour through all the waves experienced by states besides New Mexico, from 1967 through 1980. It focused particularly on task forces and official investigations.

Logically, Rommel began with Colorado and the celebrated death of Snippy in 1967. He wrote of how, contrary to the mutilation investigators' network's version, the case was layered in controversy, and that there had been at least two examinations of the carcass by two veterinarians, both of whom had attributed the animal's death to natural causes and its lack of flesh to scavenger activity. He cited the report of the late Dr. Robert O. Adams of Colorado State University, where the doctor stated the horse's condition, including the lack of organs in the abdominal cavity a month after the horse's death, was due to the action of bacteria, birds, and coyotes. He noted that the doctor had said the claims of the owner, Nellie Lewis, that the lack of brain tissue in the skull was highly bizarre, were inaccurate, and that this condition was to be expected considering that the horse had been dead a full month before these cavities were examined. Rommel included the tart declaration from Dr. Adams that we had found so funny when we first read it:

"'I know it's going to pop the bubble, but the horse was not killed by a flying saucer.'"

Rommel had also located a Dr. Wallace Leary, a veterinarian who had been given Snippy's carcass as a teaching specimen over a month after the horse was found dead. While cleaning the skeleton, Leary had found what he was positive were the entrance and exit wounds from a bullet in the pelvic bone.

"Dr. Leary believed that the horse might have been shot, possibly by youths driving along a highway near his pasture, and that the wounded horse then 'ran himself to death' through one of the many broken-down barbed-wire fences that dotted his pasture."

Rommel slid into a compact history of the Colorado siege of 1975. He supplied all the relevant details: the $25,000 in reward money offered by various Colorado agencies; the 203 mutilation reports between April and December of 1975; the thirty-five carcasses shipped to Colorado State University for necropsy; the findings of those necropsies. He included a quote from a CBI report on that agency's investigation, sent to the New Mexico State Police in July of 1978: "In a six-month period, our agents spent 1,557 man-hours on this investigation, which included undercover operations..."

"Reporters had a field day with the mutilations," wrote Rommel. "In fact," he said, "in 1975, this topic was voted the top news story in the state by the Colorado Associated Press." He pointed out that this mutilation wave was the basis for one of the first so-called books on the phenomenon, Fred Smith's little self-published religious pamphlet entitled "Cattle Mutilations: The Unthinkable Truth."

Rommel also took a solid swing at the mysterious disappearance of Dane Edwards, the editor of the Brush, Colorado, *Banner* who supposedly uncovered some startlingly dangerous facts about the mutilations and vanished amid cries of CIA harrassment and threats to his life.

"Was he 'silenced' because he was getting too close to the truth, or was his disappearance deliberately engineered by the government for whom he allegedly worked as a secret agent?" Rommel asked.

Drusylla Georgeson, the current owner and publisher of the *Banner*, told Rommel exactly what she had told us a few months before.

On December 10, 1975, the *Banner* had run a front page story declaring that Edwards's wife, by then back in their home town of Euless, Texas, had filed a missing persons report on Edwards. The *Banner* story implied that Edwards had been missing since October. The article also noted that the paper checked with the Euless and Arlington, Texas, police departments and found that no such report had been filed in that state, and that it had located a missing persons report filed by his wife on Edwards in Colorado Springs, but that the report had been cancelled a few days later.

"In short," wrote Rommel, "there is good reason to believe that Edwards—rather than being spirited away because of involvement with the cattle mutilation phenomenon—probably left Colorado because of unpaid debts and an outstanding arrest warrant."

We had tentatively reached the same conclusion, but were still curious about Edwards, especially since we had recently been put in touch by Dave Marash, then of ABC's "20/20," with a George Erianne in Colorado Springs, who had apparently hidden Edwards during his supposed flight from Brush in November and December of 1975. Erianne, a well-established private investigator in Colorado Springs, claimed not only to know a great deal more about Edwards, which he would reveal to us when we finally made our trip to Colorado in a few weeks, but also to be an ex-operative for the CIA, the old OSS, and the security force for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. We knew Rommel was probably correct about Edwards as far as he had gone, but we were reserving judgment until we heard what Erianne had to say. We were also trying to locate Edwards himself, or his wife.

Rommel continued. "Another piece of evidence which has frequently been cited as proof that the Colorado mutilations are conducted by some highly sophisticated group is the necropsy report submitted by a Colorado veterinarian, September 1, 1978, following an examination of a six-month-old Hereford steer that was reported mutilated.

"This veterinarian's report," he continued, "which is taken as the gospel truth by a number of independent investigators, has many of the earmarks of the 'classic mutilation'—the animal drained of blood by some mysterious force prior to death, the removal of certain organs with a 'sharp cutting instrument,' and the lack of blood at the scene. To better understand the role which this veterinarian had played in promoting the mutilation phenomenon, his necropsy report is reproduced below."

Rommel was, of course, talking about the report produced by Dr. William Fitzgerald of Durango, Colorado, the one Valdez had given us when we visited him in March.

It was obvious that Rommel's intent was to tear it down, as he had Valdez's police reports and Howard Burgess's theories. Even his choice of words (or was it Dr. Nancy Owen's?) betrayed his aim, "To better understand the role this veterinarian had had *in promoting the mutilation phenomenon* . . ." Rommel's text read as though he assumed that Dr. Fitzgerald had consciously wanted to propagate the mutilation phenomenon for some reason.

We felt that, regardless of how accurate or inaccurate Fitzgerald's report might turn out to be, it was an error of presumption to assume what his motives were, since, given the propensity of the mutilation buffs to seize any possible official document and wring it dry for any kind of legitimizing propaganda to support their campaign for paranormal strangeness, the odds were that it was the mutologists and their media supporters who had canonized the Fitzgerald report into a piece of magical arcana to billow their theoretical sails. Rommel reproduced Fitzgerald's report in full, then explained how he had evaluated it.

"I contacted seven experienced veterinarians. Of the seven veterinarians, five were board certified pathologists. Four of them had had extensive experience in diagnostic work."

This was an impressive panel. We had recently learned exactly what it meant when a veterinarian was a board-certified pathologist. It meant he was the veterinary equivalent of a police medical examiner for humans; that he was able to make determinations on dead animals regarding their cause of death, health prior to death, and on their post-mortem condition, at such a level of expertise that his findings could routinely be submitted in a court of law as evidence, in the same way that a medical examiner's report on a murdered human being is used in a murder trial. Board-certified pathologists are as far away from the average clinical veterinary practitioner as a Sherlock Holmes would be from the cop on the beat in a small town, or a professional research scientist in genetics is from a high school biology teacher.

Six of the seven pathologists he contacted "stated that the opinions set forth by the veterinarian in the necropsy report were not supported by the data," wrote Rommel. "Their comments ranged from 'honorable and sincere, but misguided,' to 'a bunch of malarkey.' One stated that the 'conclusions drawn were ridiculous' while another commented 'I laughed myself silly' reading this material." One of the seven did not comment on the report, but told Rommel that in all the cases of reported cattle mutilation that his laboratory had participated in evaluating, no human involvement was ever established: the animals had died of natural causes and been torn apart by predators and scavengers.

Several of these pathologists supplied Rommel with a list of sixteen questions they would have asked Dr. Fitzgerald in order to ascertain exactly how accurate his necropsy was. Rommel contacted Fitzgerald and asked him to answer these questions. Fitzgerald "eventually agreed." (Rommel never once mentioned Dr. Fitzgerald's name through all this, referring to him as the "Colorado veterinarian.")

Some of Fitzgerald's answers, however, gave us pause:

Rommel: Would not one normally expect the loss of an eye, tongue, lips, anus and rectum from the predation of scavengers and carnivores if a dead animal should be left thirty-six hours in the field?

Fitzgerald: No. An eye or the tongue, perhaps, but the other parts missing in this case are not scavenger target organs and would only have been torn or removed to gain access to the intestines. The abdominal cavity was intact.

Odd. Fitzgerald disagreed with every other veterinarian and pathologist who had ever been asked that question.

Rommel asked Fitzgerald about his professional qualifications. Fitzgerald replied that his "'experience with the field of veterinary medicine spans six years.'" Rommel checked with the Colorado Board of Veterinary Medicine and found that Fitzgerald had been licensed to practice veterinary medicine for only two years. Specifically, he graduated from veterinary school on May 13, 1978.

Dr. Fitzgerald had been practicing veterinary medicine for only about three and a half months when he did the necropsy on that animal, had been out of veterinary school for less than four months. He had certainly had little practical experience when he necropsied that steer.

Next, Rommel tackled the Montana cattle mutilation wave of 1974 and 1975. The problem was considered so serious there that "the Montana Stockgrowers Association posted a reward of $1,000 for information on persons guilty of mutilating livestock."

A number of the mutilation incidents had been reported in Cascade County, Montana, and had been investigated by Captain Keith Wolverton of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office. In 1976, "Captain Wolverton, together with Roberta Donovan, a former newspaper reporter, wrote a book entitled *Mystery Stalks the Prairie*, which contained a sensationalized account of these cases." Rommel specified that the book also contained accounts of other strange events, including UFO sightings and sightings of hairy Bigfoot-type monsters.

He then explained that "other investigators and writers have taken issue with the Cascade County cases." He offered a quote from an article written by Leland Cade in 1975 for *Livestock News and Views:*

"'Investigators in the Cascade and Madison Counties Sheriff's Offices have reported that very sharp instruments were used. Although these claims have been made, there has [sic] apparently been no laboratory examinations to confirm them.'"

In the same article, the secretary of the Montana Stockgrowers Association is quoted:

> "'We met with the Sheriffs in Cascade and surrounding counties. All I saw was slides—it wasn't very convincing. You can't tell anything from a slide. No laboratory reports were offered.'"

At this point, Rommel explained that in fact there were some lab reports available on reportedly mutilated cattle. The diagnostic laboratory of the Montana Department of Livestock at Bozeman, Montana, had examined the carcasses of "between 24 and 40 mutilated animals. According to information furnished to me, all of these mutilations were attributed to carrion eaters (scavengers)." He again quoted Leland Cade, describing what he had been told by Dr. Beckwith Hubble, director of the Bozeman diagnostic laboratory:

> "'Hubble said his laboratory had looked at 35 and that we found nothing suspicious, nothing uncommon . . .' 'In one case the lips were gone, the rectal area gone. The animal had been killed by lightning but we had to look hard to prove it.'"

With this, Rommel ended his section on the Montana incidents.

We were surprised. We had begun looking into the Montana mutilation waves of 1974 and 1975, and found that they were among the largest in the entire history of the phenomenon. Many of the Montana incidents had occurred at the same time as the Colorado wave of 1975, and were overshadowed by the Colorado incidents. We believed this was because Colorado's large CBI investigation had made all other mutilation-inundated states into second-class subjects for public and press interest at that time. There had been no official, statewide investigation in Montana, but Montana held some incidents that were central to the entire mutilation phenomenon lore. One of the strongest links between UFOs and mutilations came out of Montana. In 1975, at the height of the mutilation wave, an ICBM silo in Cascade County had been approached by unidentified flying objects at low altitude. Air Force security helicopters had been scrambled. The UFO had shot up to more than 50,000 feet and then disappeared. The entire incident was tracked on radar, and the Air Force released official reports confirming the UFO sighting to the *Washington Post* in late 1975.

In addition, *Mystery Stalks the Prairie* had come out of the Montana mutilation wave. This was the only book written about the mutilations by a professional law officer who had actually investigated the phenomenon. It was regarded by most members of the mutilation investigators' network as incontrovertible proof of the absolute seriousness of cattle mutilations. The book had been published by a mysterious organization in Montana called the THAR Institute. We were going to visit Wolverton during our research trip, however, since his book was heavily weighted toward UFOs and the bizarreness of the phenomenon, and we wanted to speak firsthand with a lawman articulate enough to have written about the subject at length.

Next, Rommel dealt with the mutilation incidents reported in Arkansas during 1978 and 1979. We were also interested in this state because among the official reports Valdez had given us were a stack of police reports from a Benton County, Arkansas, deputy sheriff named Donald Rystrom.

Rystrom had discovered and reported the first mutilation in Arkansas, a horse, in 1978, and had subsequently investigated many more that year and the next. Rystrom had occupied a position in the news coverage of the events and in the eyes of the mutologists' underground analogous to that of Gabe Valdez before Rommel's investigation: the experienced, serious law officer who was convinced that cattle mutilations were possibly the work of a secret government group, UFOs, or even a cult of some sort. Rystrom, who, like Valdez, had become a magnet for the local press, had spoken openly and often about his ideas on the mutilations. Also like Valdez, he had been one of the major forces in eliciting larger-scale official investigation into the phenomenon, in Rystrom's case, by the Arkansas State Police. They had assigned a sergeant named Doug Fogley to be a sort of shadow monitor and coordinator for Rystrom's investigations and those of other local lawmen in the state.

Along with the copies of Rystrom's reports and Sergeant Fogley's official transcripts of those documents, Valdez had also given us two sets of reports by veterinarians who had examined mutilated animals at the request of Rystrom or the Benton County Sheriff's Office. These reports, like the report of Dr. Fitzgerald from Durango, stated that after examination the animals were concluded to have been purposely killed and cut with sharp instruments. We were still trying to decide whether or not to include Arkansas in our research tour itinerary, but we were leaning toward it because of the amount of official documentation we had, and because of those veterinary reports.

Rommel explained that the mutilations had started in Benton County in April of 1978, and that by the end of the year over twenty had been reported in the area.

"In 1979," he continued, "reports of mutilations began to come in from other parts of the state." It was at this point that State Police Sergeant Fogley had been assigned to coordinate a statewide investigation.

"In April (1979), Sgt. Fogley, together with another local law officer, testified at Senator Schmitt's hearing in Albuquerque that there had been twenty-eight mutilations in Arkansas—all of them 'confirmed' cases."

All roads seemed to lead to Senator Schmitt's conference. The "other local law officer" was Don Rystrom, and, knowing Rommel's style, we sensed that this exclusion of Rystrom's name meant he was due for the discreditation hammer.

Rommel explained that mutilations were reported throughout 1979, and that by July of 1979 "the problem was considered so serious that the Arkansas Cattleman's Association announced that it was offering a reward of $1,000 for information leading to the arrest of those [persons responsible for] mutilating cattle in Benton and Franklin Counties."

Then Rommel dropped the other shoe, right on the unfortunate Deputy Rystrom.

"That fall, however," he began, "new developments took place which seriously undermined the validity of many of the official statements that had been made about these Arkansas cases.

"On October 15, 1979, Sgt. Fogley informed me that the law officer who had investigated the greatest number of livestock mutilations in Arkansas had been terminated by his agency, following a 30-day suspension. The underlying factor in his dismissal, according to Fogley, was his 'inability to tell the truth'—an 'inability' very much evident in the official reports he had submitted on livestock mutilations.

"Sergeant Fogley told me that he was prepared to inform the media that the Arkansas State Police had drawn invalid conclusions about cattle mutilations—conclusions that had been based upon reports furnished by law enforcement officers that contained 'deliberately false information.' "

We had to go there to test the truth of Rommel's story and discover the circumstances of Rystrom's dismissal and Fogley's change of mind.

Rommel continued, explaining that Sergeant Fogley had told him that in Arkansas, authorities were now convinced that ninety-eight percent of the reported livestock mutilations in the state are the work of scavengers aided by the normal decomposition of the carcass.

"He admitted that cultists or publicity seekers could be responsible for some of the incidents. However, even if this were so, he pointed out that the percentage involved would be extremely small in terms of the total number of reported mutilations."

Finally, Rommel mentioned the study conducted in Arkansas by University of Arkansas anthropologist Dr. Nancy Owen, the ghost writer of his report. He did not mention (or perhaps it was Dr. Owen herself who had written this section of the Rommel Report) her involvement in his project. All he said was that some of Fogley's observations were further documented in her report, and that the report is of interest in that it "helps dispel many of the myths—some of them widely circulated—that surround the Arkansas cases."

"One of the most highly publicized finds in Arkansas," said Rommel/Owen, "and one which evoked considerable interest in New Mexico, was the discovery of drugs in some of the (mutilated) Benton County animals."

Quoting from Nancy Owen's report, the text then reads:

" 'Analyses performed by the Animal Diagnostic Laboratory at Oklahoma State University revealed the presence of drugs in three animals—succinylcholine in the horse, santonin in a yearling bull, and mescaline in a bull calf.' "

Quoting further from the Owen paper, the report noted that two of these drugs have uses in veterinary medicine. Santonin is a wormer, but, because it is extremely dangerous, is no longer on the market. The writer points out that this does not mean the drug is not available locally, since " 'many older Benton County residents do their own veterinary work using supplies they have on hand.' "

Owen pointed out that succinylcholine is a muscle relaxant, " 'an interesting piece of information in view of the fact that the rancher had castrated the horse [found dead and mutilated] the previous morning.' " Our own research had also revealed that succinylcholine is indeed a muscle relaxant, actually a paralytic used to immobilize horses for the brief period necessary to perform castrations.

"Interestingly," Rommel noted, "the report of this incident was widely circulated at the law enforcement portion of Senator Schmitt's 1979 conference as evidence of a 'classic mutilation.' " Rommel then outlined the facts of this particular case.

We checked our files. So far, Rommel was perfectly accurate. He was following, almost verbatim, Sergeant Fogley's abstract of the incident, which was a direct rendition of Deputy Don Rystrom's original police report.

Rommel decided to look further into the incident himself. He asked a Santa Fe druggist named Doyle Potter to supply him with information about succinylcholine. "Potter informed me that succinylcholine was a muscle relaxant used extensively throughout the United States during the castration of horses," he wrote. Potter also mentioned that the drug was usually given by injection, that it is relatively unstable, and that it was necessary to use a "guess and by golly" system of estimation when administering it to an animal, feeling around for how much would be needed and how long it would keep a large animal down. Potter also told Rommel that unless the individual was extremely proficient the animal might get up in the middle of the operation and bleed to death.

Rommel also talked to Dr. Albert McChesney at the University of Colorado, who told him that succinylcholine metabolizes extremely quickly and is therefore difficult to identify as residue in blood samples. "He states the fact that this drug was located at all in horse indicates that the animal must [therefore] have been given a large overdose, which, according to him, would undoubtedly cause the horse's death."

Not content with these two opinions, Rommel contacted Dr.

Gary France, the veterinarian who had done the necropsy on the horse. France told Rommel that "in his final observation, the horse had been 'put down' by an overdose of succinylcholine." Continuing, the report noted that it was "interesting that when later interviewed by Dr. [Nancy] Owen on November 18, 1979, Dr. France stated that he *didn't know the horse had been castrated*." (Italics ours)

"It was a stallion the way I understood it. You're the first one that's ever mentioned to me that it was castrated the day before," France had said.

What a tangled rivulet of illuminations ran through this case! Given that the horse had been castrated the day before, it would not have been at all mysterious that it had been dosed with succinylcholine, or that there was evidence of surgical incision on the wound on its sexual organs, or that its testicles were missing. The fact of the animal's castration was confirmed by Sergeant Fogley's abstract of Deputy Rystrom's on-the-scene police report on the animal. But if, when Rystrom delivered the horse to Dr. France for necropsy, *Rystrom had not told the doctor that the horse had been castrated the night before, the vet would of course have noted the missing testicles and the surgical wounds as something highly unusual!* France's comment to Dr. Owen confirmed that when he performed the necropsy he was not aware that the horse had been castrated the night before. Dr. France had not been told the full story when he analyzed the carcass; he had been (intentionally?) given the impression by Rystrom that the horse's sexual organs had been intact and had consequently seen their surgically precise removal as strange and indicative of human action.

We telephoned Dr. France to verify his lack of knowledge of the horse's castration, and also to see if he had changed his opinion that the animal had been purposely killed and mutilated.

France told us that despite his new knowledge that the horse had been castrated the day before, he still believed that someone had mutilated it. He felt this because the wounds on the horse's body in no way corresponded to a standard castration. He explained how not only had the testicles been taken, but a large circle of flesh and muscle tissue was missing, from behind the testicles up to the middle of the penis, half of which had also been removed.

"No one removes all that hide, or the penis, for a horse castration," he said. He agreed to meet with us on our swing through Arkansas to discuss the case further.

Regarding this case, Rommel had concluded that "the facts strongly suggest that the horse had been accidentally overdosed (with succinylcholine) by the rancher performing the castration—and that this contributed to the animal's death."

We did some checking on the credibility of this hypothesis: there was something about the sequence of events that did not ring true, given the nature of the drug succinylcholine. According to Rommel and Owen's formulation, the horse had been dosed with the drug, castrated, and had recovered sufficiently to stand and to be observed standing near a fence at least twelve hours after having been given the drug. The horse had been mobile and strong enough to have grazed right up until the moment of its death from an overdose of the drug. This did not fit properly.

We researched succinylcholine. The drug is metabolized in seconds, its onset is lightning fast, and its effect lasts only about two minutes. In order to lengthen its action, it must be administered in a controlled intravenous drip. The point about the drug is this: when it works, it works fast, is metabolized fast, and its effects wear off fast. Death comes when it is given in a large enough dose to paralyze the intercostal muscles and diaphragm long enough for respiration to stop and for the victim to asphyxiate. In other words, *if* an animal is going to die from an overdose *it will die within one to three minutes after an elevated dose of the drug is administered, or it will not die from the drug at all.*

This Arkansas colt *got up and walked away* after it was presumably overdosed with succinylcholine and castrated. It was seen standing by a fence many hours later. It was chemically and pharmacologically impossible for that animal to have died from an overdose of succinylcholine given to it many hours before its death, if it was able to get up, walk, and breathe after its testicles were taken off. There was no way that Rommel's conclusion could stand up.

What about the elevated levels of the drug found by the Oklahoma State University lab? Well, we reasoned, since Rommel's conclusion (or was it Nancy Owen's?) was unworkable, what are some other rational possibilities for the animal's death, without the invocation of UFOs or secret government plots?

First, the elevated succinylcholine levels in the horse's blood could be attributed to one of two causes. One, it was given a large dose on the morning it was castrated. The dose was sufficient to immobilize it, and too large to be fully metabolized, but not large enough to kill the animal, since it got up and walked away later. The dose was merely large enough to leave the horse weak but mobile, and to leave enough unmetabolized residue in its blood to be detected in a lab analysis. What, then, caused the animal's seemingly quick death, so quick it was still chewing on its forage?

We looked over Dr. France's report again. The answer to this one was easy: the animal had been castrated several hours before it died. The testicles are attached to the ends of the spermatic cords, each of which contains an artery to supply blood to the organs. When cords like these are cut, they tend to retract into the nearest bodily cavity, in this case the abdominal cavity. France had found four gallons of blood in the horse's abdominal cavity. That's a hell of a lot of blood, thirty-two pints, more than thirty-two *pounds* of blood. The sequence of events was now obvious.

The horse had been dosed with enough succinylcholine to leave a detectable residue in its blood; the castrating rancher had done a sloppy job, and the horse's bleeding, severed spermatic cords had retracted into its abdomen, where they continued to bleed. Since these are not major arteries, it took many hours for the animal to lose enough blood internally to die. The horse wobbled away from its stall, a little shaky from the residue of succinylcholine and the trauma, slowly bleeding to death internally. It stood by a fence, weakened. Someone saw it there. A few hours later when its blood loss became critical, it keeled over and died.

There was one other possible explanation, given the short-acting nature of succinylcholine. The horse was drugged by the rancher but *not* given an elevated dose of succinylcholine, castrated, and walked off to stand at the fence, bleeding internally. Sometime later, someone came along and did administer a fatal overdose of succinylcholine to the horse, which killed it and also accounted for the traces found in its blood. Perhaps this person then mutilated the animal, expanding the castration damage, and removed the large circle of flesh, including half of the penis, from the belly. Perhaps this person also removed the tongue.

Although the facts allowed this as a possibility, the other factors in the case tended to indicate that the first version was probably what had happened. How to account for the extensive cutting around the animal's sexual organs, far more extensive than a standard castration? Easy: either some coyotes and other scavengers had enlarged the wound, expanding the fresh castration cut, and both Dr. France and Deputy Rystrom had mistaken this damage for knife work, or the rancher who castrated the horse had simply been incompetent and had done an abominable job. Instead of cutting off only the testicles, he had cut out the huge section of muscle, tissue and the penis as well, probably adding to the animal's demise. If he had done this, he certainly would not have admitted it.

Rommel was not such a hot detective after all. His research had not been astute enough to reveal that his conclusion that the animal had probably died from an overdose of succinylcholine was illogical and, more important, totally inconsistent with the drug's action. He had missed the significance of the four gallons (Four gallons! How could you miss that?) of blood in the abdominal cavity. Even though Rommel's earlier excoriations of Valdez, Burgess, and Gail Olson had locked nicely with documents we had, we would now be a bit more careful about accepting his other assertions.

Rommel next spoke of the third drug found in an Arkansas animal, mescaline. He noted that it had no known veterinary use, but that it is "an alkaloid derivative of the peyote cactus which is available to grazing animals in the Arkansas area."

The animal with mescaline in its blood had been found in Benton County, in the extreme *northwestern* corner of the state, absolutely out of the range of the plant. Rommel was dead wrong again.

To be fair, Rommel did offer another possible way the mescaline could have gotten into the bull's tissues. The animal's owner had complained to Dr. Nancy Owen that he suspected that "hippies" had been camping on his property. The implication was that the "hippies" had fed the bull some mescaline.

One thing was certain: there were too many unanswered questions about this case for us to accept Rommel's cavalier dismissal of it. And Rommel's error about the peyote cactus made us even less willing to chalk this case up to another instance of mistaken predator damage.

There was one other thing about this particular animal and about the Arkansas mutilations that Rommel had apparently decided to ignore. During the entire period, especially in 1978, there had been a good deal of evidence discovered in Benton County indicating that one or more local cult groups might have been responsible for at least some of the mutilations. Several stone altars were found in the county, made of painted rocks covered with cryptic symbols from the Theban alphabet, and names of pagan deities both known and unheard of. At one of these sites, candles had been found, along with several animal skulls. None of the skulls, however, were fresh enough to have come from recently dead animals. And no one had been able to come up with the origin or identity of the cult that made the altars.

Our research turned up that witchcraft was not unusual, either in Arkansas or Benton County, near the Ozark Mountains. Ozark witchcraft had been the subject of a book by Vance Randolph, and the area was thick with old local legends about witches. In fact, it was through witchcraft that Nancy Owen had become involved with the mutilations. Her husband, Dr. Jerome Rose, was also a professor of anthropology at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. When the mutilations had first started, Rose had been extensively interviewed by the local press because of his expertise in the field. He had noted a possible link between the mutilations and cult practices, especially since the stone altars had been found in the same county as the mutilated animal. The theory had interested the Benton County Sheriff's Office as well.

Dr. Rose had noted that the first mutilation and subsequent ones had followed the phases of the moon, possibly in accordance with the ritual calendars of many ancient witchcraft practices. The sheriff's department became even more interested in the connection, and Rose then became bold. He was quoted in several newspaper articles as saying that if the mutilations were really being done by a cult following a lunar cycle, they should end on a particular day in May. They did not, and this was taken by the police and the media as proof that the cult connection was invalid. This feeling was reinforced because the police had been unable to unearth any specific connections between the cult altars and the mutilated animals. They had not identified anyone who might have been involved with the cult or cults responsible. Stalled, they had turned in other directions, from outright skepticism to more bizarre theories.

Deputy Sheriff Don Rystrom did nothing to stem this drift in his statements to the newspapers. He became progressively more adamant in his declarations that the mutilations couldn't possibly be the work of cults. The situation in Arkansas had ended up like those in New Mexico, Colorado, Montana, and elsewhere. As the mutilations finally ceased, there were warring camps of believers left behind in Benton County: UFO theorists, government conspiracy believers, cult buffs, and skeptics.

We thought that since so much cult paraphernalia had been found in an area known for this kind of activity, the Benton County authorities had been too quick to abandon this as a possible solution to the mystery. As far as we were concerned, the cult explanation was a distinct possibility in Benton County.

Drugs and herbs have traditionally been a part of many variations in witchcraft. Certainly drugs have been incorporated into many spiritual practices, especially those of marginal and possibly violent groups practicing some patched-together form of Satanism *cum* voodoo *cum* witchcraft *cum* black magic. Why wouldn't a modern variant cult use popular drugs like mescaline in their rituals? And why wouldn't the practitioners feed the sacred drug to their sacrificial victim as well? This would account for the mescaline in the bull calf. It made sense, doubly so since there was no way the animal could have gotten hold of peyote or mescaline unless someone gave it to him.

It bothered us that Rommel had so quickly dismissed this case without paying closer attention to all its convoluted details. Without the details, and with the lie that peyote cactus grows in Arkansas, it was an open-and-shut example of another hysterically distorted mutilation tale. With the details and the new knowledge about the peyote plant's unavailability in the state, the case could not be shrugged off in the way Rommel had.

He continued to speak of Arkansas incidents that had been investigated by Dr. Nancy Owen. Perhaps the skewed presentation was Dr. Owen's responsibility. Perhaps she had written this particular section of the Rommel Report, since it dealt with material she herself had gathered, and perhaps Rommel had simply not checked her assertions very closely.

In one other Arkansas case, the writer noted that there were interesting parallels with the New Mexico cases in which clamp marks had reportedly been found on the legs of mutilated cattle. In this case, "rope marks were discovered around both hind hocks of a mutilated calf found in Benton County, Arkansas." The official report stated that, although the carcass was found seventy-five feet from the owner's home, there was evidence that the animal had been dragged a quarter of a mile from the pasture where it had died.

"Like the clamp marks reported in New Mexico," said the writer, Rommel or Owen, "this discovery was also cited as dramatic evidence that livestock mutilations are being executed by some sophisticated organization.

"Further investigation by Dr. Owen, however, produced a rather ordinary explanation for the presence of these marks," the writer explained. It turned out that Dr. Owen had interviewed the animal's owner, and he had told her that a young boy who exercised his horses for him had found the dead calf one day while he was riding. He had roped the carcass's rear legs and dragged the calf up near the owner's house so he would find it. The kid forgot to tell the owner he had done it until several days later.

"'By that time, the Sheriff's office had already investigated the incident,'" and, of course, it had been logged as a mysterious mutilation, silently committed within seventy-five feet of the owner's house, dropped from the air, as evidenced by the mysterious clamp marks. Since the recounting of the incident and this resolving twist were quoted directly from the text of Dr. Owen's official report, prepared as a scholarly study under the auspices of a special state grant, we felt we were safe in assuming that she was telling the truth.

One last small aspect of the Arkansas mutilations was covered. In this case, there was a color photograph taken by the Benton County Sheriff's Office of a mutilated animal. Seemingly emanating from the carcass is a "mysterious shaft of light." "This photograph," said Rommel, "according to Dr. Owen, has been cited as evidence of a possible connection between mutilations and UFOs."

Rommel continued. "The interesting thing about this photograph was that it was shown in a documentary and at a conference, both of which were covered by the media and televised. I attended this conference in Little Rock. The claim was made during the presentation that this mysterious shaft of light, said to be invisible to the naked eye, also appeared in other photographs taken of the same animal using different cameras and film."

Deputy Sheriff Don Rystrom was on the chopping block. It was he who had gone to the Little Rock conference and maintained the "shaft of light" was indicative of something weird about the mutilated animal. Rommel wrote that later on the day of the conference, he had approached this officer and suggested to him that the "shaft of light" was a static spark, "which sometimes is created (inside a camera) if you rewind the film too rapidly.

"Dr. Owen's study independently confirmed my own observations," Rommel said. She had questioned the police photographer (not Rystrom) who took the picture. According to Rommel, this photographer told her flatly that he was aware that the shaft of light was indeed a static spark. "He also pointed out that *although he did take other photographs of the animal, the light leak appeared in only that one picture*."

Next, the cattle mutilation incidents in Oklahoma were covered. Rommel noted that there had been twenty-eight incidents reported in Oklahoma since 1975, the most recent in April of 1979. "Authorities have determined that these animals died of natural causes, their carcasses subsequently attacked by predators." End of Oklahoma section. Rommel had included a full copy of the task force report in the appendix, and all this information checked out perfectly with it.

Rommel next devoted about a paragraph each to the remaining states that had told him they had some record of cattle mutilation activity. Each paragraph was a dismissal of incidents reported in the states as mutilations, which Rommel had been told were either death by natural causes followed by predator damage or were some kind of small-scale local work by pranksters.

Unfortunately, Rommel had fudged some data in this section as well. He had either failed to discover or purposely omitted some extremely interesting cases that could be backed up by official people.

Arizona and Illinois were dismissed, reports there having been either of undetermined cause or frankly disproven as mutilation. Dealing with Idaho, Rommel said several mutilations had been reported there in 1976, one in 1978, and one in 1979. He said the investigators had sent him a letter explaining that all these were caused by predators or publicity seekers. We, however, had heard different.

Agent Joe Motsinger from the Iowa Department of Criminal Investigation, who was investigating the recent calf mutilation in his state which had just been confirmed as a surgical job by pathologist John Andrews at Iowa State University, had pointed us toward Idaho. He had told us he had been helped in his investigation of possible cult involvement in the Iowa mutilations by an investigator for the Idaho State Bureau of Investigation named Steve Watts. Watts, he told us, had investigated a small wave of mutilations in Idaho in 1976 and had told Motsinger that, using undercover informants over a period of several months, he had conclusively broken the Idaho mutilation cases, identifying the specific cult group responsible for them. No arrests had been made. Motsinger declined to tell us any more, suggesting that we speak to Watts ourselves. We had been chasing Watts for weeks, trying to do just that. Despite what sounded like a solid lead from a reliable source, Rommel acted as if nothing like the Watts investigation had ever taken place in Idaho.

Under Iowa Rommel acknowledged that the state authorities were working on approximately twelve cases "which they believe are human-induced." He had been advised by the Iowa DCI that the agency believed it to be a local problem. He took care to say that "None of these mutilations have been confirmed by the Iowa State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory."

But sitting on the desk in front of us was an envelope from Joe Motsinger at the Iowa DCI. Inside it were: a color photograph of a recently mutilated bull calf found in Keota, Iowa; a letter from Gerald W. Shanahan, the chief of the agency's Criminal Investigation Division; and copies of two letters to Agent Motsinger from Dr. J. J. Andrews, professor of pathology and practicing veterinary pathologist at Iowa State University.

The letter from Shanahan summarized the facts of the case. The animal had been reported as a mutilation. The investigating officers found that both the up side *and the down side* eyes had been taken; the tongue had been removed, and the animal's teeth were coated with blood; there were blood smears on the animal's right shoulder that looked as though they might have come from someone wiping an instrument or their hands on the animal's hide; the scrotum and testicles had been removed—"the incision was very clean and appeared to have been made with a sharp instrument." The ground under and around the animal was dry and hard, so there were no footprints or tire tracks. The calf had gone down with no signs of struggle.

Motsinger had taken the animal to ISU, and Dr. Andrews and a post-doctoral associate, Dr. G. W. Stevenson, had necropsied it. According to Chief Shanahan's letter, "both doctors stated that the animal had been cut with a very sharp instrument and that it was definitely not the work of predators."

One of the letters from Andrews to Motsinger was a detailed description of the animal's condition, followed by Dr. Andrews's conclusions. Lab results had not revealed the cause of death, but said "it is our opinion that the gross appearance of some lesions highly suggest human intervention. More specifically, the level at which the tongue was missing would make it nearly impossible for a predator to have accomplished the removal."

The last piece of paper in the envelope was the final lab report from Dr. Andrews on the animal. Scans for tranquilizers and other drugs had all come up negative.

This envelope from Iowa did not exactly support the statement Rommel had just made. Andrews's report had been written on May 23, just about the time Rommel had closed down his research and was writing the report. He could simply have missed this new development. More unfortunate for him, though, he had included in the appendix of his report a series of letters from titled veterinarians, heads of colleges, pathology departments, and the like, all stating how cattle mutilations always turned out to be predator and scavenger damage, how they were highly skeptical about claims of human causation, and like comments. One of these letters was from Dr. Vaughn A. Seaton, who had ended his letter to Rommel with these words: "I believe 'animal mutilations' are largely imaginative but faulty conclusions."

The funny thing was that Dr. Vaughn Seaton was the director of the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Iowa State University, from which Dr. Andrews's letter confirming the calf mutilation as human-induced had just come. Rommel's tone of authoritative dismissal suddenly assumed the roar of bluster. But there was another, more subtle message here.

We wondered how many other exceptions we might find if we canvassed the lab staffs of all the veterinary bigwigs whose letters appeared in Rommel's report's appendix as a catalog of debunking specialists?

The next state to be dismissed was Kansas. "No cases have been confirmed by the Veterinary Diagnostic of Kansas State University," said Rommel. There was a letter from one of the KSU pathologists in the appendix to back this up. Fair enough, Dr. Seaton's embarrassment notwithstanding. Rommel then went on to explain that he had spoken with a man named Philip S. Arkow—"president of the Colorado Federation of Animal Welfare Agencies, and secretary of the National Animal Control Association in Colorado Springs." Rommel said that Arkow told him he had "recently returned from a workshop on mutilations sponsored jointly by Kansas State University and the Kansas State Animal Control Division.

"Arkow stated that a paper was presented at this workshop by Dr. George Kennedy of the Pathology Department of Kansas State University. At the workshop, it was concluded that in all cases investigated since 1976, no evidence of human involvement had been discovered. Rather, the mutilations were determined to be the results of normal predator and scavenger activity."

We decided to check out this allegation just for the hell of it. We called Dr. George Kennedy at KSU and asked him to send us a copy of the paper he had delivered at the workshop, along with the pamphlet advertising the conference, which would tell us whether or not it had actually been a "workshop on mutilations" as Rommel claimed.

When the envelope from Dr. Kennedy arrived, we discovered that Rommel had made another sloppy mistake: his rendition of the conference that Philip Arkow had attended was totally inaccurate. Far from being a "workshop on mutilations," the conference had been called an "Animal Control and Public Health Seminar." Its public relations flier described it as a program "designed for the animal control officers of Kansas, and other law enforcement people associated with animal programs."

There had been no "workshop on mutilations," as Rommel had said: the conference had been a general meeting on animal control. Dr. Kennedy's paper had been presented for half an hour, according to the conference schedule one of the shorter ones at the conference. We read the paper, a copy of which was enclosed.

It had exactly nothing to do with cattle mutilations of the kind Rommel had been investigating. It was essentially about the mortality of lambs because of attack by common predators—wolves, coyotes, dogs, and the like.

Even the short note Dr. Kennedy had included with the paper bore this out. "I doubt if this article has much in it that you're looking for," he had written. "This paper really doesn't have much on differentiating human mutilations from predator kills." In fact, it had nothing on the subject.

This incident raised a question: Rommel had done this once; how many other times had he been similarly careless in his report?

Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Missouri were quickly shelved with a few lines apiece: all reported mutilations in those states were attributed, through various official reports, to predators, or racked up as unexplained, presumably predators, but not conclusively demonstrated as such. Nevada's entry read: "Several mutilations were reported during the past few years, according to information in their files. Only two were thought to be caused by humans." He gave no further details on these cases, yet we saw no reason to get excited. What were two cases likely to be publicity seekers or hoaxers? The point was that two cases did not constitute a mute wave, and certainly did not reflect the mutilation investigators' network's claims of upwards of 10,000 mutes in the past ten years.

Nebraska's paragraph was interesting. "Since 1974, the Nebraska Highway Patrol has investigated between 130 [and] 150 mutilations. Of these incidents, 20 necropsies were performed. In only one case was the mutilation caused by a human. This individual was later apprehended and prosecuted. According to a letter dated August 7, 1979, this individual had been greatly influenced by media accounts of mutilations."

Why, we wondered, had this case never made the rounds of the mutology network: "Mute Suspect Apprehended"? Perhaps because the circumstances were too mundane, no lights in the sky or intimations of CIA machinations, just some poor idiot copycat caught in the act?

New Jersey had one incident in 1978, and it had turned out to be a mistake. A veterinarian had necropsied a carcass in a field, someone found it and reported a mutilation.

North Dakota: "All the mutilations they had investigated were caused by skunks, coyotes, badgers, and other wild animals," Rommel said, according to the chief agent of the state Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

Oregon: Nine mutilations were investigated. Two were tested by the police lab. Chew marks were found on the carcasses.

South Dakota: "At least 12 cases were examined by authorities in 1974." The Animal Diagnostic Laboratory at South Dakota State University found evidence of predator damage in each case.

Texas: "Human involvement was definitely eliminated as a possible cause in each case" examined by the Animal Diagnostic Center at Texas A&M University.

Utah: "In a letter dated July 17, 1979, authorities stated that all mutilations they investigated had been resolved. Natural causes were responsible for most of them. In the few cases where human involvement was determined, the mutilators turned out to be pranksters involved in an initiation scavenger hunt at their college."

Wisconsin: "A number of mutilations had been reported in 1975 and 1976." The state authorities informed Rommel that in all these, the animals had died from natural causes. "In most of these cases, the mutilations were caused by predators," he concluded.

Finally, Wyoming: "According to the state veterinarian at Wyoming State University Laboratory, the mutilations investigated in that state are caused by predators."

"The role played by the media in fostering the mutilation phenomenon is also apparent in this chapter," Rommel continued, "particularly in the discussion of the Colorado and Arkansas incidents."

Millions For Defense, But Not One Cent For A Mute!

Our dilemma with this attempt to dismiss Rommel's findings was clear. How did these mutologists *know* that Rommel had not seen cases that might, had he not examined them, have been completely accepted by the network as "confirmed" mutilations?

Rommel had set up stringent guidelines for evaluating his evidence and had stuck to them; he had used experts to corroborate his observations. In other words, he had conclusively proven in those twenty-seven New Mexico cases that not only had the damage actually been done by predators, but also that ranchers would report predator-damaged carcasses as mutilations, that in fact a rancher's statement that an animal had been surgically mutilated was not worth much, at least to a cautious investigator, and that even official police reports such as Gabe Valdez's could be vague, misleading, illogical, lacking in supporting evidence and just plain dead wrong. Rommel had actually proved these things. But the most devastating message in his report was that if this had clearly happened in New Mexico then it was possible, even probable, that it had happened in other states as well to a greater or lesser degree. This meant that any mutilation buff with half a desire to be objective and clear-headed about the phenomenon would have to look quite carefully at these implications and perhaps reevaluate the entire mutilation phenomenon in the light of what Rommel had just revealed.

Rommel, however, dealt with the claim that he had not seen any "real" mutilations in a different way.

"I agree that no classic mutilations have occurred during Operation Animal Mutilation," he said. "However, I would like to know the basis for their statement. More specifically, I would wish to address the following questions to them:

"(1) How many of the mutilations that I investigated in this project did they also investigate?

"(2) Specifically, which ones did they investigate?

"(3) How do these cases differ from the 'classic' cases to which they are comparing them?

"Can these questions be answered, or is their observation just another one of those unsupported statements that I have encountered so frequently during the course of my project?

"Are the conclusions I have reached unique?" asked Rommel. "To the contrary, the data obtained from qualified investigators and experienced veterinarians in other states only confirm what I have discovered in New Mexico. In fact, I have found no credible source who differs from this finding, nor has one piece of hard evidence been presented or uncovered that would cause me to alter this conclusion."

Again, he had a point. In every state where expert pathologists, veterinarians, and others had become officially involved in investigating the mutilations, the final result had been the same. Necropsy reports had revealed that, like the ranchers in New Mexico, the ranchers in other states had reported as mutilations animals actually devoured by predators. There were exceptions here and there, but not one of these contained anything that would point to any large-scale culprits on the order of government CBW testing programs, extraterrestrials, or secret prospecting operations. There were still plenty of open questions, specifically in Arkansas, Iowa, and Canada, but by and large Rommel was correct.

The turn of phrase that Rommel had used throughout the report, and had unsheathed again here, was "qualified investigator." What would constitute a qualified investigator?

A qualified investigator would be someone specifically trained in techniques of criminal investigation, methods of observation of the scene of a crime, and the identification of evidence. Naturally, the more experienced such a person was, the more qualified he would be.

What else constituted a qualified investigator? Well, in this case, a thorough knowledge of cattle, and/or veterinary medicine would be one requirement. Failing that, any trained and qualified investigator with easy access to experts in the fields of livestock raising and veterinary medicine would be considered qualified. Again, Rommel filled the bill.

None of the mutology buffs had access to any experts in veterinary medicine, livestock, or any other fields that bore on the cattle mutilation question, and it was obvious that there was not one seriously qualified investigator in their underground. They were all amateurs, all poorly trained to deal with the subject, and all seemingly uniquely ignorant of research procedures and methods of constructing proven cases, not to mention the subjects of animal medicine and livestock raising. Not one of them was a rancher or had even been raised on a ranch.

They had nothing going for them, yet they controlled the opinions of literally hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people, regarding cattle mutilations. Not one of their testimonies would be acceptable as expert or even informed in a court of law.

To further bolster his assertion that all official qualified investigators from other states had made findings that supported his own conclusion, Rommel then presented six pages of quotes from various veterinarians and veterinary pathologists at universities and diagnostic laboratories, who had examined reportedly mutilated carcasses. The comments, of course, forcefully supported Rommel's position.

"Predators and scavengers feed on the remaining loose tissues of the carcass, such as lips, eyelids, and the external genital organs." "It is the opinion of our pathologists that the percentage of dead animals that have lost parts to carnivorous [animals] has not increased in recent years, although the number of clients that *believe* their animals have been mutilated by humans or some other unexplained phenomenon have increased . . ." (Italics ours) "I believe that the cattle mutilations are due to flesh-eating birds and small animals and not [to] an unknown person or group of persons . . ."

Rommel then restated the astute point around which he had built his New Mexico investigation: that in order to eliminate the verdict of predator and scavenger damage, one *must show* that the incisions in the carcass have been made by a knife or other sharp instrument.

Rommel continued on to discount all the other features of the classic mutilation that are claimed to accompany the surgical wounds. He restated his excellent point that the organs removed in the classic mutilation are the same as those removed by predators, and, to add some zest to this restatement, he condensed the results of an experiment conducted by two officers from the Washington County, Arkansas, Sheriff's Department in September of 1979.

Two deputies monitored the changes that took place in the carcass of a calf that had just died. They stayed with it for thirty hours. At the end of that period, the tongue was gone, one eye was removed down to the bone of the orbit, the anus was cored, the intestines had been expelled by bloating, and there was very little blood at the scene. The deputies had watched the damage done by "blowflies, skunks and buzzards."

Again, Rommel noted that the lack of blood reported in the carcass was probably due to the fact that predatory animals do a neat job, and to the fact that blood in a dead animal pools in the down side and coagulates, giving the appearance of bloodlessness to the top side.

Next came the claims of the "deliberate avoidance of mutilated carcasses by other [predator and scavenger] animals." Rommel accurately noted that in many police reports on mutilated animals scavenger activity *is* noted, along with wounds allegedly reported to be from mutilation by humans. He also noted that scavengers will not touch the bodies of animals that have died from certain diseases. Also, predators and scavengers would often not go near a carcass that was redolent with the smell of man. Many reported mutilations had been found and then examined, touched, and observed at close range by gangs of police, neighbors, news people. It was no wonder that predators never came back to these carcasses: the entire area had been laced with the odor of human beings.

Rommel attacked the claims that the carcasses of mutilated animals decay either abnormally rapidly or abnormally slowly. This had been cited as evidence that there was something extremely weird about the manner in which the animals had died, and had been used to support Howard Burgess's implications about radiation exposure as well as suppositions about germ warfare experimentation and UFOs. Rommel pointed out that the rate of decay of a carcass depended on a number of factors: the disease that killed the animal, the weather, temperature, and types and population of scavengers in the area.

"Depending on which factors are present," he said, "the carcass may appear to decay more rapidly or more slowly than normal."

Another good point, and another one we knew to be accurate.

The crux of the dilemma was this: who in cattle country had enough guts to stand up and say that these well-intentioned people, their own friends and neighbors, did not know what they were talking about? Apparently no one, not even Rommel. He never simply stated the naked truth, that these people were *not* accurate observers, *not* adequate to conclude that there were no signs, tracks or evidence around the mutilated animals, and *not* to be believed unless an experienced observer or expert could corroborate their findings.

Rommel then peppered into his text a few suggested reasons why the cattle mutilation reports had become so widespread a phenomenon. He spoke of an article by Burton Wolfe that had appeared in the May 14, 1976, issue of the *San Francisco Guardian*. The title of the piece had been "Demystifying all the Satanic Conspiracy Stories on the Cattle Mutilations." In the article, Wolfe claimed that the entire cattle mutilation phenomenon had begun as a hoax, a joke, perpetrated by the host of a Minnesota radio show, Dan Fry, who had announced over the air that cattle mutilations were being done " 'either by some weird Satanic cult or supernatural creatures arriving on the range in UFOs.' "

According to Rommel quoting Wolfe, "Fry, apparently intending his comments as a joke, was alarmed at the impact they subsequently had on ranchers and farmers.

"Whether or not you accept Wolfe's explanation," Rommel said, "his observations about the part played by the media are quite revealing. Similarly, my own investigation had clearly shown that the media have played a very important role in promoting both the livestock mutilation phenomenon and the lore surrounding it."

For support of this statement, he referred to the Truchas mutilation he had investigated in his own project as "a classic example of how a newspaper [the *Rio Grande Sun*, through Gail Olson's articles] not only can distort the facts, but can also deliberately choose to ignore them in the face of a more sensationalistic story. This incident, as I noted previously, would undoubtedly have gone down in history as another 'classic mutilation' if I had not investigated the case myself. Although the reporter was later made aware of the many inaccuracies contained in her articles, *she never printed a retraction*." (Italics ours)

Rommel then referred to a research paper written by Dr. James R. Stewart, associate professor of sociology at the University of South Dakota, "Collective Delusion: A Comparison of Believers and Skeptics," a study of the cattle mutilation wave which had occurred in Nebraska and South Dakota in 1974. He had included Stewart's paper in full in the report's appendix. Rommel noted that Dr. Stewart had demonstrated "a positive correlation between the number of reported [mutilation] incidents in a prescribed area, and the number of news inches devoted to livestock mutilations in the media."

We knew that a correlation like this did not necessarily mean there was a cause-and-effect relationship between news coverage and mute reports, but given what we had already discovered about media influence over the consciousness of the public in the mutilation phenomenon, we saw how this might be a significant finding. We turned to the appendix and read Dr. Stewart's report, where he made an exceptionally astute yet simple observation.

"The inability of the social-control agencies to satisfactorily explain the early reports of cattle mutilations was probably one of the major factors contributing to the significant increase in both the number of reported mutilations and the area over which they occurred."

From Dr. Stewart's angle, the progression of cause and effect was quite visible and logical. Strange events, cattle mutilations, were reported; the proper official persons, the "social-control agencies," were informed. These included the police and the local sheriff's departments.

In conclusion he stated, "The failures of the social-control agents stemmed from their being suddenly confronted with an unusual situation which was not adequately covered by the accepted norms of explanation. *Local law enforcement personnel have little if any, experience in determining causes of cattle deaths.*" (Italics ours)

"Consequently, they were inclined to adopt the farmers' explanations in the absence of any solid refuting evidence of their own. The same was true of local veterinarians. *Rarely do they examine dead cattle; instead, they are usually asked to treat living animals.*" (Italics ours)

In his analysis, Dr. Stewart diagnosed the entire cattle mutilation episode in South Dakota and Nebraska as "a classic case of mild mass hysteria." He explained the panoply of influences which had resulted in the local delusion of cattle mutilations. First, the mutilations shared a "common theme" with other mass delusion instances of the same kind. He explained that in episodes like the cattle mutilations people are confused and frightened by the seemingly unexplainable, and the human mind craves an answer, anything to replace the feeling of anxiety engendered by ambiguity about the real cause. In this instance (and in most other cattle mutilation waves), "the agents of social control actually fostered the ambiguity and uncertainty not only by denying, but, in many instances, by directing, aiding and abetting the creation of the bizarre explanation."

This description certainly sounded like Officer Gabe Valdez, "abetting" Howard Burgess in his attempts to convince the public that the Dulce cattle had been irradiated and dropped from the air.

"The inability of the social-control agencies to eliminate the uncertainties surrounding the episode resulted in a failure to decrease the anxiety levels of the believers." Therefore, Stewart said, people reached into the mixed bag of bizarre explanations periodically offered for strange events in the United States and pulled out two, Satanic cults and UFOs, in order to have *some* explanation for the mysterious mutilations.

Finally, Rommel reached his last, short section, entitled "Recommendations."

"My first recommendation is that no additional money be spent to fund law enforcement investigations of this phenomenon," he wrote. He did note that he felt it should continue to be studied by "anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists and other behavioral scientists."

Rommel then advised any lawman who might be called to investigate a reported mutilation to "conduct a logical investigation to collect evidence and testimony to support a successful prosecution of the individuals involved," meaning whoever might have mutilated the cow, *if* the evidence pointed that way.

"If not, you should investigate the incident no further. For example, you would not conduct a homicide investigation after it had been established that the individual had died a natural death or committed suicide. The same reasoning should be applied to livestock mutilations.

"Don't use terms such as 'surgical precision,' which are conclusions. Stay with the facts, let the laboratory experts make conclusions. Also, don't be misled by statements made by non-authoritative sources, for as Adolph Hitler once said: 'Tell a lie enough times and it will be believed.'

"While I would hesitate to classify these colorful reports as deliberate lies, nevertheless, the principle remains the same. Constant repetition of even some of the most sensationalistic conjectures may eventually be accepted as truth. Perhaps Dr. Samuel Johnson expressed it best when he said:

> " 'It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying that there is so much falsehood in the world.' "

Rommel expressed his hope that his report would help "those engaged in the cattle industry and others to put behind them the rumors, theories, and fears that some highly organized criminal activity or extraterrestrial conspiracy is responsible for these mutilations."

Yet he ended the text on a strangely pessimistic note:

"However I tend to agree with the following observation made by Dr. Stewart in a letter he sent to me . . .

" 'The efforts of knowledgeable experts hopefully will provide a rational explanation for this bizarre episode. Unfortunately, the histories of similar events show that reasonable, scientific explanations may deflect or deter, but never completely eliminate the fantastic explanations that gullible, naive persons adopt.' "

The Network Reacts

During the weeks after the news that the Rommel Report had finally been released, we could almost feel the heat coming off the long-distance telephone lines between Paris, Texas (Tom Adams), Denver (Linda Howe), Albuquerque (Howard Burgess), Dulce (Gabe Valdez), Farisita, Colorado (David Perkins), and several other nodes on our imaginary United States map of the mutology network. Even our friend Dave DeWitt in Albuquerque, who had sent us the copy of the tape of Rommel's April press conference, was in the act.

We had been among the first to receive a copy of the report, and we had read and analyzed the whole thing before any of the others had even gotten their copies. We talked to them sparingly about it. The fact that none of them had read it didn't seem to keep Adams, Howe, and Burgess in particular from condemning the report outright and saying that not only was it just what they had expected, but that they refused to accept its conclusions.

We did learn something during this period, however, about the speed and tenacity with which the mutology network could snatch and hold any sliver of rumor, gossip, or information to advance its cause. One of us had casually mentioned in a phone call to Tom Adams that we had found several glaring discrepancies and errors in the Rommel Report. Not seventy-two hours later, we spoke to Linda Howe to make final arrangements to meet with her on our trip in a few weeks. Almost the first words out of her mouth were, "Tom Adams tells me you've found a few holes in the Rommel Report."

Word traveled fast.

Meanwhile, we observed only two obvious and angry responses from cattle mutilation buffs. Gail Olson wrote a long, shrill editorial in the July 10, 1980, issue of the *Rio Grande Sun*. Full of nasty comment about how Rommel had wasted taxpayers' money with his investigation, it nonetheless offered no evidence to contradict anything his report had said.

In an attempt to let the readers know where she stood, Olson noted that Rommel's "inklings certainly are of an earthly cast." She chided him for ignoring "persistent reports of unmarked helicopters sighted near mutilation sites," and for not taking seriously enough "ranchers reporting UFO sightings during their nighttime head counts of endangered cows." She railed at how Rommel had "shrugged off . . . meticulously worded police reports by officers listening carefully to guarded tales of strange happenings in their isolated territories."

Next, she took a swipe at Rommel's use of Dr. Stewart's sociological study of the South Dakota and Nebraska mutilations to support his contention that a form of mass hysteria had been involved in the New Mexico cattle mutilations. She called Stewart a sexist because his statistics had revealed that women were more likely than men to accept bizarre explanations for the mutilations. She went on attacking Stewart's study for more than half the length of the editorial.

Finally she wrote of "believers" in the bizarre answers for the cattle mutilation phenomenon. Presumably she counted herself in this camp:

"Few [believers] suffer from tunnel vision," she wrote.

"Believers ask a lot of questions—about the deaths of cows and about other facets of life," she wrote.

Why, then, had no believers ever asked about veterinary medicine? Why had none of them asked about how many ways there are for a cow to die of natural causes, without struggle and seemingly without being visibly sick? Why had not one believer given even a nod to the principles of forensic pathology? Why were they so afraid to look reality in the face?

"Believers don't walk through life with blinders on," Olson wrote.

The believers were obviously blind to the one thing that might help them understand: the possibility that the mutilations just might not be an extranormal phenomenon. The whole point was that the believers, and obviously Gail Olson, *needed* the cattle mutilations to be bizarre, they needed them to remain a mystery, they *needed* a Rommel to hate.

The other visible reaction to the Rommel Report was a letter that Howard Burgess sent to Rommel's boss, District Attorney Eloy Martinez in Santa Fe. At the bottom of the letter, Burgess noted that carbon copies had gone to Senator Harrison Schmitt, Tom Adams, Peter Jordan (who sent it to us), Dr. Leo Sprinkle, Fritz Thompson (of the *Albuquerque Journal*), and Gabe Valdez.

The tone of the letter, like the tone of Gail Olson's editorial, was one of thinly veiled bitterness.

"I was under the impression that Ken Rommel was investigating the cattle mutilations until I saw his 'book,'" Burgess had written. "I suddenly realized that he was really doing humorous Western fiction." Burgess offered to illustrate the next "book" Martinez's office might want to produce. "It might even be better than the last Peanuts book," he said.

"If Ken had attacked the problem instead of people he might have produced some interesting *non*-fiction," Burgess wrote, ending his letter.

Burgess all but called Rommel a fraud and a liar, and impugned his report. Yet, like Gail Olson, he offered no proof, no refutation, no argument of fact to found his position, only his wasted rage.

It was obvious why Olson and Burgess had responded publicly with these enraged but weak and pointless insults at Rommel:

neither of them could disprove the conclusions he had carefully drawn in his report. Rommel's conclusions had weight; they were arrived at through a logically consistent method and cool-headed, reasonable thought. They followed the evidence at hand, used the benefit of expert opinion, and never stated what they could not support. Neither Olson nor Burgess ever had anything but rumors and uninformed opinions.

Olson and Burgess made fools of themselves in public this way because Rommel had punched their tickets in the course of his report. He had skewered them for the frauds they were, without once resorting to the kind of sniping, insult, and name-calling they were doing now. Rommel had slowly, and with thorough documentation every inch of the way, pointed out Burgess's phony posturing as a theorist and authority on radiation, cattle metabolism, and investigation. He had shown, with the help of experts, that Burgess simply did not know what he was talking about. In the same careful fashion, he had also shown exactly how sloppy, inaccurate, and sensationalistic a journalist Gail Olson was. He had proven that she was a rumor-monger and a poor researcher, biased at best, an amateur at worst.

We were, however, delighted that at least Burgess had committed himself in writing to a position on the Rommel Report. He had even sent a copy of the letter to Fritz Thompson at the *Albuquerque Journal*, obviously hoping the paper would publish it. Burgess had still not learned to keep his mouth shut. He did not know when he had been shown up as a fake. We called him to find out his intentions with the letter.

"I have nothing to prove," said Burgess.

What could we say?

6

"Who Will Change Old Lamps For New?"

The Arabian Nights
—The History of Aladdin

Open Sesame

If anything, we had gone into our work with a bias in favor of the independent mutilation investigators and the journalists who had doggedly followed the mutilations in their states. Now they were all starting to look like comic-book characters, or, rather, caricatures of the parts they had taken in the drama. Some, like Linda Howe and Tom Adams, had stripped their own disguises through their attempts to use their absurd methods to "prove" that UFOs were responsible for, or at least involved in, cattle mutilations. Some, like Burgess, Valdez, and Gail Olson, had been unmasked by Ken Rommel.

But even Rommel was no hero. He had overreached himself in much of his report, had skipped over some cases that needed a closer look, and had obviously been out to drive the impact of his investigation far beyond his home state of New Mexico. In his need to shatter the mutologists, he had begun making the same errors of fact and method as they.

From here on, we decided we would accept news clippings from the mutologists, since they could provide leads and new information, and we would accept contacts, but we knew enough to assume that anything any mutologist might tell us about cattle mutilations in general or about the aspects of a particular case was probably wrong or, at best, incomplete.

We suspected that where there was one Valdez, there were probably others. From here on in, we would not accept any official police reports as evidential unless they were backed up by written opinions from some qualified source. This qualified source would have to be someone more learned than the local veterinarian—preferably a university vet, most preferably a veterinary pathologist. From now on there was no such thing for us as a "confirmed" mutilation unless these criteria could be met.

We would subject any veterinary reports we did collect to analysis by the best expert we could find. We didn't want to use any of Rommel's veterinary pathologists, since we felt this would not be the most objective way to go about it. These men already had opinions, and besides, most of them were located in the West and the Midwest, and communication would be expensive and difficult.

We needed a top-level veterinary pathologist near New York, and, luckily, we had been directed to Dr. John King at the New York State School of Veterinary Medicine of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. It turned out that not only was King a veterinary pathologist, he was a world-renowned professor of the subject. He was also the director of the necropsy service of the college's diagnostic laboratory, and his particular specialty was diagnostic pathology: he was known for his ability to discover what had killed an animal, often in cases where other pathologists had failed. The fact was that King might just be the best practicing veterinary pathologist in the United States. He had never been involved with cattle mutilations, so his attitude toward the subject was unclouded by prior opinions. It was he who had directed us to study Blood and Henderson's book, *Veterinary Medicine*. We'd go Rommel one better. We had the top man in the field: we were taking no chances.

Rommel's report had also warned us about believing what we read in the papers. Newspaper clips were now to be only leads, and none of them would be accepted unless we could research the specific case and locate relevant details ourselves. And since we had the wherewithal to make a case for the baselessness of the mutologists' claims, we could, if we chose to, dispense with the cattle mutilation phenomenon right here, once and for all, by agreeing with Rommel, by providing a few examples of our own, and by simply sweeping the few seemingly unsolvable cases that might be due to human action (the Iowa bull calf, maybe Dr. Hatfield's and Dr. France's animals in Arkansas) under the rug.

There was, however, a trap in this response: the danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Just because we had discovered that there was a large element of mass hysteria in the phenomenon, and just because we had found that the mutologists were promoting their own personal causes, did not mean that the cattle mutilation phenomenon at large had no substance to it.

Flailing Out The Chaff

We decided to go back into our files and try to find a few examples of actual evidence that had been taken by the mutologists or the public to make a case for strangeness in the mutilations, but which had actually turned out not to be so strange after all. We found a perfect example right away, in Fritz Thompson's 1977 article about the mutilations in the *Albuquerque Journal*'s *Impact* Magazine.

In this extensively researched piece, Thompson had written lengthily about the reported mutilations in Tex Graves's Logan County, Colorado, the year before. Strong rumblings about UFOs and government or military involvement in the Logan County mutilations had been heard. One of the incidents which had given rise to these rumors was the case where a reportedly mutilated cow had been found dead with its mouth full of radar chaff. Even Jacques Vallee, a researcher we respected, had made references to it in *Messengers of Deception*. Unfortunately, it seemed that neither Vallee nor the mutologists nor anyone else who relayed the story to us had read Thompson's article.

First of all, this incident did not involve only a dead cow with a mouth full of radar chaff. According to Thompson, Tex Graves found the empty cardboard container that had held the radar chaff about 20 yards from the carcass. He also found several more unopened boxes of the stuff within a 200-yard radius of the carcass.* This indicated that all the boxes probably reached that area at the same time, and one of them had been open.

How, then, could the chaff have gotten into the cow's mouth? Whenever we had been told about this incident, indeed when Jacques Vallee had written about it, he had said that the radar chaff had been *stuffed into the cow's mouth*, implying that someone had forcibly put it there. This, of course, implied that someone had intentionally killed and mutilated the animal and stuffed its mouth with the aluminum shreds. But since neither Vallee nor Tex Graves nor anyone else had been there to witness this, how could they be sure that's what happened? Clearly the

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**Impact*, the *Albuquerque Journal* Magazine, October 25, 1977.

idea here was to find out first how the boxes of chaff had gotten to this location in the first place. Fritz Thompson had done exactly that.

As he explained in his article, he had obtained the code that had been stamped on those boxes of radar chaff and, using that code, had traced the boxes "through the Pentagon and five Air Force bases across the country." He discovered that the boxes did in fact belong to the Air Force, and had contained radar chaff. Thompson also discovered that just west of Sterling, Colorado, in Logan County, is an Air Force intercept training area used by Strategic Air Command bombers and fighter jets. To quote Thompson:

"In their training, the fighters 'attack' the bombers and the bombers employ several defensive tactics, including the dispensing of radar chaff."

An Air Force spokesman told Thompson that prevailing winds in that area from out of the west would blow from the training area toward the spot where the cow was found with the mouthful of radar chaff.

" 'It is not inconceivable,' " Thompson quoted the Air Force spokesman as saying, " 'that some of the boxes could have been ejected unopened, and they fluttered to the ground near Sterling.' "

Well, that explained how the boxes of radar chaff got on the ground near the dead cow.

"This explanation may account for the presence of the boxes in the pasture," wrote Thompson. "But it does not shed light on how the contents of one box wound up in the mouth of a mutilated animal, nor why none of the other boxes had been removed or disturbed."

But cattle are not very bright, and have a tendency to eat almost anything, and die all the time from eating nails and bits of barbed wire which puncture their intestines. This meant that a cow was also dumb enough to eat radar chaff. We understood immediately how the chaff got into the dead animal's mouth.

As to the claims for mutilation which Vallee and others advanced, as far as we knew, they had never been examined by either a veterinarian or a veterinary pathologist with the knowledge to determine that the wounds were in fact surgical and not misidentified damage caused by predators. This cow was only a *reported* mutilation, and without reliable proof that it had been surgically cut we had to assume that it was damaged by predators. Therefore the story had a simple, unmysterious ending. The cow had eaten the radar chaff, died when it impacted its intestines, and been torn up by scavengers.

This was an excellent illustration of how a simple reported cattle mutilation could very quickly metamorphose into an ingredient in the bizarre mutilation *phenomenon*. It was passed from hand to hand, from mutologist to mutologist, and to mutilation journalists, and into the public mind to scare the hell out of ranchers, all the while lacking the crucial details that lifted it from the arena of weirdness into the realm of simple explanation.

Diagnosis

From now on we would subject every reported cattle mutilation to this kind of stringent analysis. We would take a history of the cases we pursued, in the same way a physician takes a detailed history of a patient before he makes a diagnosis.

A history was the key to the accurate perception of the cattle mutilations. If you knew something about the animal's health prior to death, and about the health of the rest of its herd (Had animals from this herd been dying mysteriously for some time, possibly due to the presence of poison plants in their grazing range or a mineral deficiency in their diet?); if you knew about the rancher's care of the animal (Had it been neglected or underfed? Had there been a drought in the area recently, denying the animal water and setting it up for sudden death by dehydration or sodium chloride poisoning? Had the rancher used any poisonous chemicals on his property that might have been eaten by the animal?); if you knew the immediate circumstances around the animal's death (Had there been a lightning storm in the area between the time the rancher last saw the cow and the day it was found dead? Was there a chance then that the animal might have been killed by lightning?), then you stood a far better chance of knowing whether or not the circumstances of its death were indeed as mysterious as they might be presented by the rancher, the local newspaper, or a mutologist. If you could take a fairly complete history of the dead cow, it would be easier to decide whether it might have been a candidate for an actual mutilation, or if it was more likely a case of natural death followed by mistaken predator damage.

We decided we would apply as many of these principles of classical diagnosis to our own work as we could, and, more significantly, would pay close attention to only those reported mutilations that yielded some kind of evidence that could be analyzed, either by us or by Dr. King at Cornell. This meant that from here on in we would turn our attention to cases like the ones from Arkansas, which provided Dr. Hatfield's and Dr. France's veterinary reports asserting that the animals they had seen were mutilated.

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The Lesson Of The Lawyer's Wife

Possible, Possible, But Is This Trip Really Necessary?

We dispatched a researcher to the silent halls of all the best libraries in New York, seeking detailed background information on all, and we meant *all,* topics which might relate to the landscape of theories and claims that made up the cattle mutilation phenomenon. We were searching for as many correspondences as we could find in the real world to the ideas behind the prevailing theories for the causes of the mutes. We wanted to see if there were any technological developments that paralleled some of the suppositions made by members of the mutology network.

For instance, Burgess and Valdez had made much of the fluorescent splashes found on the hides of the Gomez animals. We wanted to see if there was any kind of work being done using fluorescent dyes that would parallel their assumptions. There was.

The September 9, 1974, issue of *Aviation Week and Space Technology* had carried an article about a laser-activated fluorescent dye being experimented with by the Navy for search and rescue operations at sea. The dye, fluorescein sodium salt, was a substance that pilots downed at sea would spill into the water to create a patch of fluorescent water around their life raft. Night-flying search aircraft would look for this glowing patch to find the pilots. Someone had recently discovered that if this dye was struck by a laser beam it would itself lase, that is, send off a coherent, powerful light signal instead of merely reflecting beams of light aimed downward by the searching helicopters. This, of course, would make it easier to find the downed pilots. The system was being tested in 1974.

Generalizing from this article we could see that, if nothing else, the technology existed to mark cattle with fluorescent laser-sensitive dye and then selectively locate them from the air at night using a laser beam search device on a helicopter or balloon. In other words, Burgess's and Valdez's theory that the animals were premarked and selectively found later to be killed and mutilated was not inconsistent with existing technology. Of course, this did not prove that it *was* being done, and we couldn't place much faith in the fluorescent marking theory just because we had seen this article. To make a link, we would need to obtain another sample of the supposedly fluorescent material on the Gomez cattle and analyze it chemically. It would then be necessary to prove that this substance could be made to lase by exposure to a laser beam. Then we would have to compare its chemical composition with substances known to be used by the armed forces in laser dye rescue work and prove that its chemical makeup was the same as that used by the military. Finally, for absolute proof, it would be necessary to identify animals that had been supposedly marked by this substance, turn them out to pasture, and see if they were mutilated at some time in the future, a species of decoy operation like those used by the police. If they were not, then the whole proof would be questionable.

We felt fairly sure, however, that if Burgess or, worse, Linda Howe, had discovered this laser dye locating system in *AWST,* that the word would quickly have made the rounds of the cattle mutilation investigators' network that "proof" had been found that the military was mutilating cattle.

The existence of this laser dye system, however, did illustrate another fascinating aspect of the cattle mutilation *phenomenon*. But we were wary of being drawn into the trap of thinking that, just because the technology existed to build and operate our imaginary LTA cattle mutilation aircraft, the imaginary craft therefore existed.

There was much, much more. Our research had netted some material about the Church Committee's 1975 investigations into the CIA's clandestine activities. Among the morsels revealed at the hearings was a battery-powered dart gun that fired tiny darts of poison. The darts themselves would dissolve a few seconds after impact, leaving no trace of the projectile that had delivered the lethal dose. Here was more technology that could easily fit into the cattle mutilations under any of the government conspiracy theories. A nice hook, but, as usual, all this proved was that it was *possible* to use such devices in mutilating a cow. It established no connection between the dart gun and cattle mutilations.

We had a lot more information like this, but we decided to save it until after our trip, when we would measure it against the hypotheses we had constructed to see which ones could stand up and which ones we would discard as unworkable.

International Journalism

The history of the mutilation phenomenon in Canada was nowhere near as complicated and convoluted as it is in the United States. Nineteen-eignty was only the second year that mutes had been reported in any numbers in Alberta. The RCMP had, even before their recent press blackout in 1980, treated the whole subject delicately, to avoid muddying their investigation. Months before, David Perkins had sent us a small collection of 1979 newspaper articles from Alberta.

Most of them were from the *Edmonton Sun*, out of Edmonton, Alberta. Like newspapers anywhere else, Alberta's fell into categories: tabloid papers, whose orientation was toward a sensationalistic presentation of news, and a "newspaper of record," which took a more conservative, balanced approach. In Alberta, the paper of record was called the *Calgary Herald*. The *Edmonton Sun* was the region's tabloid, its equivalent of the *New York Post*.

One of the articles from the *Edmonton Sun* was of particular interest. It was headlined "Mystery Deepens," and was about the 1979 mutilations. It told of "startling new facts" about the Alberta mutilations which had been "recently revealed" by a University of Alberta professor named Bill Meilen. Meilen, it said, had been working closely with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in their investigation, and it listed the facts he had revealed. Among them were these:

> "The discovery of fractures in many of the animals consistent with injuries caused by being dropped from a height of at least ten feet.
>
> "A 1,500 pound bull with its shoulder bones crushed and wrenched as though it had been picked up by a grab."

Here again were supposedly air-dropped cattle. We decided to check into this.

The article also quoted Meilen as saying he believed that "the evidence points to biopsies being performed by beings using a means of flight 'beyond our comprehension.' "

Bill Meilen was sounding a bit like Howard Burgess and Linda Howe.

Later in the article, it was said that Meilen was also an expert on cults and had written "dozens of books and plays on the occult and the activities of ancient cults." He was positive that the mutilations were not caused by a cult group, but by UFOs.

After several days of trying to reach Meilen, he finally called us. He was a professor of drama, not a scientist. He told us the same thing, almost word for word, that he had told the *Edmonton Sun*—"means of flight beyond our comprehension . . . biological specimens." He told of the time he had seen a UFO in 1951, when he was on a troop ship heading to Korea. He told us there was no possible way that any cult could be responsible for the mutilations.

We asked him if he could tell us how to lay our hands on the official reports in which he had seen confirmation of broken legs on cattle and the bull with the crushed shoulder bones.

"I never saw any reports," he said. "That information didn't come from official reports. They were accounts that appeared in newspaper articles. I don't remember exactly which newspapers they were, but I think some of the clippings were from Colorado papers."

Meilen's "facts" were not facts at all, only the musings of a professor of drama, loosely based on newspaper reports that may or may not have been correct. News? Hardly.

A few days later, we were reviewing some recent clippings from Colorado, gathering background on the press coverage of the reported mutilation of Bob Blake's horse in Simla in April, when we found something that brought us up short.

It was a clipping from a local Colorado agricultural paper called the *Ranchland Farm News*. The short article was headlined "Mutilations Continue," and it was on the front page of the April 24, 1980, issue. It briefly mentioned the reported mutilation of another horse in the area, not Bob Blake's. The caption under the photo of the horse explained that "county law officials have claimed that this horse died of natural causes and was attacked by predators after death, even though the classic signs of another mutilation are obvious."

The paper never told *how* this horse was established to be a mutilation. But there was the grainy photo, the "proof." The wound on the horse's rear was obviously ragged and torn, even in the poor quality reproduction. The sheriff's department had ascertained that the horse went down due to natural causes and then predators, but it didn't matter. This was the power of the mutilation phenomenon at work.

After briefly describing the "mutilation" of the horse, the article went on to note that Canada had been "hard hit" by the slayings. It then proceeded to quote "facts unveiled by a University of Alberta professor, Bill Meilen," and went on to list verbatim (and without proper credit) the startling "facts" Meilen had fed to the *Edmonton Sun* a year before about broken legs on mutilated cattle and a bull found with its shoulder bones crushed!

These statements were given as if they had been confirmed, the same way the *Edmonton Sun* had delivered them the year before. The *Ranchland Farm News* had capitalized on the "university professor" angle, just as the *Sun* had.

The boldness of this stupidity amazed us. One newspaper had published, as confirmed, unconfirmed assertions from another newspaper which had not verified them. Not only that, but the *Ranchland Farm News* implied that these "facts" related to Canadian cases of reported mutilations, while Bill Meilen had told us that he picked up these "facts" from a Colorado newspaper. These non-facts had just made a complete circuit across an international border and back, wrongly credited, unconfirmed, and from a source totally unqualified to dispense them, and yet in each case *no one had checked the statements to see if they had any validity.*

Rommel would have loved this. Here was a living example of how the press had played its part in promoting cattle mutilations. Fittingly, the last paragraph of the article reminded everyone to be sure to watch KMGH-TV's May 25, 1980, broadcast of "A Strange Harvest."

Dr. John King

We telephoned Dr. John King, the crackerjack veterinary pathologist at Cornell University. He had been reading the

material we had sent him a few weeks before, and he had promised to give us a preliminary opinion on the cattle mutilations.

King had already made some phone calls to fellow veterinary pathologists around the country. He had checked with some trusted colleagues in Colorado about the reliability of Dr. Albert McChesney at Colorado State University.

"The guy's OK," said King. "I can't argue with his findings. You should pay attention to them." Score one for the 1975 and 1976 reports from CSU.

King then handed us a warning and advised us to keep it in mind throughout our research.

"Don't trust any pathology determinations made by a clinical veterinarian," he said, meaning a veterinarian who treated live animals, as opposed to a veterinary pathologist, whose specialty was dead animals.

"Any clinician who makes pathology determinations is operating out of his field. They don't know anything about pathology, so their conclusions are questionable," he said. We understood his point right away, but we were a bit disappointed. This meant that although it still paid to look more closely at veterinarians' reports like those from Dr. Hatfield and Dr. France in Arkansas, we could never hope for an unquestionable solution because these men, and any other vets, were not pathologists. In the interest of prudence, we would therefore not call any reported cattle mutilation that was confirmed by a veterinarian an actual confirmation. These were merely more believable than so-called confirmations made by lawmen, mutologists, journalists, and ranchers.

"Whatever you do," Dr. King told us, "don't ever trust a sheriff's observation about the condition of a dead animal." These people were never trained in pathology, and had virtually no knowledge of veterinary medicine. He addressed himself particularly to the issue of the reportedly broken legs found on mutilated cattle.

"Forget it," said King. "It's hard for even a trained veterinarian to diagnose a broken leg. I would never believe a sheriff's report if I were you."

King spoke about the idea of analyzing organs from mutilated animals for mineral traces for the purpose of prospecting, or for concentrations of radioactive substances to monitor radioactive pollution.

"The eyes are no good for either of those," he said. "The sex organs are no good, the udder is no good, the intestines are no good, the tongue is no good. The only organs worth taking for that kind of analysis would be the kidney, the liver, or bone." None of these were ever taken in a so-called "classic" mutilation. Score one for H.J.M. Bowen's *Trace Elements in Biochemistry.*

We then hit Dr. King with one of the staple anecdotes of the mutilation phenomenon, one which was always used to point the finger at a government or military conspiracy.

In 1977, an experienced USDA veterinarian named Dr. Robert Hedelius, from Ephraim, Utah, had examined a reportedly mutilated horse in that state. He had, he said, found a small, highly concentrated area of *Clostridia* bacteria in tissues of the animal's neck. Hedelius concluded that the bacteria had been intentionally injected into the animal's body in order to kill it. He relayed his findings to the Utah press, and immediately thereafter was told by his superiors at the USDA lab to stop talking to the news media, which he did.

This turn of events was immediately snapped up by mutologists and cattle mutilation fans alike as absolute proof of a military CB warfare experiment as the cause of cattle mutilations.

"I've got five or six animals just like that in the clinic right now," King said. "Would you like to come up tomorrow and see them?"

What on earth did he mean, we asked him? He explained. Animals with these kinds of infections were extremely common, he said, but the concentrated, injected infections were not intentional, they were accidental.

"Look," he explained. "Ranchers do a lot of their own doctoring. They use hypodermic needles on their stock all the time, and they keep their own stores of antibiotics, vaccines, and vitamins. No one is leaning on them to maintain sterile conditions. Here's the way it happens: a rancher gives one of his animals a shot, say, of vitamins, but the animal is infected with a disease the rancher's not aware of. These bacteria contaminate the needle he uses, and if he injects a second or third animal at the same time, he puts the needle back into the bottle, the bugs go into the bottle of vitamins and contaminate it. They multiply there, just as they would in a lab culture. If he comes back to this contaminated bottle and uses it a little later, the bugs he injected into it from the first sick animal have multiplied, and by that time he's actually injecting later animals with a powerful culture of the infection from the first animal." Presto, a tightly circumscribed, virulent infection in an animal, injected directly into its tissues. Happens all the time. So much for the terrible revelation of Dr. Hedelius.

The Word From Canada

Next, we canvassed the Canadian media to get a feel for how the Canadian press and TV felt about the mutilation reports there. Our agreement with Corporal Lauber of the RCMP forbade us to let them know that the RCMP was willing to speak with us. We also could not let the Canadian reporters know that we would be in their neighborhood in a few weeks.

We wanted to explore how the newspapers in Canada had divided into factions as the American papers had, producing two kinds of news coverage: sensationalistic, unresearched, and oriented toward UFOs, mystery, and the bizarre, like that in the *Ranchland Farm News;* and modulated, factual, and accurate, like the articles carried during the 1975 Colorado mute wave by the *Denver Post.*

The reporter from the tabloid *Edmonton Sun* was full of phrases like "story of the decade" and rumors about germ warfare testing by the British Army in Canada. He had no evidence, no proof, but he believed he was on to something.

"I spoke with Gabe Valdez about this," he confided. "Valdez is an expert on cattle mutilations. Have you ever spoken with him? He told me he thinks it's a government operation, and that he's close to solving it."

So much for the *Edmonton Sun.*

We spoke with the reporter from the more sedate *Calgary Herald* who had covered the cattle mutilation reports in 1979.

"We took the attitude that we wouldn't feed the kind of panic mentality that occurred in the States," she explained.

"We were more interested in the way the ranchers were affected by the mutilation reports," she said. She had been aware from the beginning of the Canadian reports that news coverage could be an element in the mutilation phenomenon.

"I wondered," she said, "is this thing feeding on itself? How much does press coverage motivate copycats to go out there and cut a few dead cows, just for the hell of it? Is it really predators?"

She told us that the local weekly newspapers in Alberta had been taking the opposite approach, issuing scare headlines and "hype," as she called it.

"You could see how the mood of panic would follow that kind of coverage," she told us.

We asked her why the RCMP had called down its press blackout.

"I think someone offended Lauber," she said. "Maybe it was the sensationalistic wire service coverage of the mutilation reports." In her opinion, the RCMP had stopped talking to the press because they felt it was not handling the information responsibly.

"I'm aware of how the media has fed this thing in the States," she said. "So is the RCMP. Things are different here, we don't have a lot of county sheriffs running around making claims they can't back up. The RCMP investigation is centered under the control of one person, Corporal Lauber. He knows everything that's going on."

She told us that she spoke with Lauber regularly about the mutilation problem, even though she had promised him she wouldn't print anything. She and the Mountie came from the same home town and had a good rapport.

"Lauber believes some of the mutilations we've had up here are for real," she explained. "He believes it's a cult, or several cults. He thinks the RCMP is close to solving it."

Our next phone call revealed exactly why the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had stopped speaking to the press. We telephoned a TV producer named Murray Dale at CFCN-TV in Calgary. Dale had covered the mutilations extensively in 1979. It was Dale who had flown Gabe Valdez up to Canada to appear on his show a few weeks before. Dale had also produced a half-hour TV show about the mutilations which had aired before Linda Howe's "Strange Harvest."

"I've been having a problem with the cops," Dale told us. "I'm scared about it. Nobody knows what's happening. Lauber won't talk about anything."

Murray Dale, too, was "convinced that it [cattle mutilations] will be the story of the decade."

Dale knew the University of Alberta professor, Bill Meilen. "I had Meilen on to do a half-hour show about the mutilations last year," he explained. "Yeah, he's a drama professor. He claims to be an expert on cults. He's very good on the air."

Dale had some tart words about the RCMP's investigation. He had met Dr. David Green, the veterinary pathologist working with the Mounties in their investigation, and didn't like him.

"I think the RCMP put the lid on it because they're embarrassed. They haven't been able to come up with an answer, and it's bad for their image," he explained.

Dale had also heard that the RCMP believed the mutilations were being caused by a cult.

Here it was again. The reporter at the *Calgary Herald* had also said that RCMP had structured its investigation around a cult or cults being responsible for the Alberta cattle mutilations. And the June 5, 1980, issue of the *New York Times* had carried a two-paragraph wire service shirttail headlined "Cults Blamed by Canadian Police for New Mutilations of Animals." The article said only that the cases reported in 1980 were considered by the RCMP to be similar to the ones reported in 1979. It also said that there were three cases under investigation, and that only two of these exhibited characteristics that led the Mounties to believe they had been caused by a cult. Of course, we had been receiving rumor reports for the past few months on the Canadian mutes from the mutology network, and their information pointed up the same old dilemma of conflicts between the number of *reported* cases and the *actual* number that were considered suspicious by authorities. Gabe Valdez had told us that there had been ten confirmed cases in Alberta in 1980; others had told us that there were as many as eighteen. Yet the RCMP, quoted in the *Times* story and in several articles from Canadian newspapers, always gave the number of suspicious cases as either *two* or *three* for 1980.

Still, the cult perspective interested us. What did it mean? The idea of cults committing the mutilations had been out of favor among American cattle mutilation followers for five years. Since all police agencies agreed that it was impossible for a hypothetical cult this size to operate for so long without leaving some evidence behind, the argument went, it was generally believed, not only by mutologists but also by such police professionals as Carl Whiteside of the CBI, that the cattle mutilations could therefore not be the work of such a group.

This was reasonable. But there was a large assumption in this reading of the cult argument: that all of the very small number of cattle mutilations that had been examined by qualified people and found to have aspects indicating human involvement had been committed by members of a single, nationally organized group. There was no evidence at all that any two mutilations had been committed by people from the same group. The fact that a large cult would ultimately reveal itself through error might have been misread. The mutologists and police had taken this lack of evidence to indicate that there was no chance of cult involvement in the mutilations, when all it really implied was that it was unlikely that there was a *single, centrally organized group* responsible. But a small percentage of cattle mutilations in many states might have been committed by members of local cult groups that were *not* part of any larger one.

What if there were independent fringe cults all over the U.S. and Canada who were involved in hybrid forms of magical practice and black witchcraft that required animal sacrifice in their rituals? We already knew that the large occult underground in this country, both benign practitioners of traditional Wicca and evil-bent devil-worshippers, was characterized by one trait above all: a complete lack of centralization, central organization, and official hierarchy. Local, independent blood sacrifice groups could easily account for the lack of the kind of definitive, case-breaking clues that would ultimately be dropped by a large, highly organized national group. Small cells of independent cultists in different counties and states would have no problem keeping their activities secret. A marginal Satanist group or blood cult in particular would be secretive because their practices would be likely to get them into trouble. And also, if they were mutilating other people's cattle as part of their rituals, they would know they were breaking the law and in danger of arrest.

It was also true that, just like everyone else, cultists travel and have friends, acquaintances, and relatives in other states. It was reasonable, therefore, to assume that a blood cultist in Arkansas, for instance, might have friends in Colorado, members of a completely different blood cult. It would be natural for them to swap techniques and rituals over the phone, or during friendly visits.

Suppose, eliminating copycat cases, this very tiny percentage of actual mutilations was the work of individual cults in various areas? It was a nice idea, it worked, and it was also backed up by the fact that there were two official police investigations, one in Iowa and one in Canada, aimed at cults as the culprits for the small number of their local mutilations that actually turned out to show evidence of human intervention. Obviously, the State Department of Criminal Investigation in Iowa and the Royal

Canadian Mounted Police were interested in cults for a reason. They must have turned up some evidence or informers to have begun moving in that direction. We already knew that there had been cult sites found in Iowa, so we couldn't wait to see what the RCMP had.

As we thought more about cults, another factor suggested itself. There had been cult worship sites and altars found in many of the states that had been plagued by cattle mutilations—Montana, for openers, Arkansas—and then there was the story from State Investigator Steve Watts in Idaho, which we had yet to confirm, about the cult group he had positively identified as responsible for the few mutilations reported in that state in 1975 and 1976.

There was also another reason, we believed, why the mutology network had missed the boat on cults. If cults were responsible for cattle mutilations, then UFOs, spacemen, and the government could not be to blame. And since almost all the mutologists were really using the cattle mutilations to try to support their belief in flying saucers or conspiracies, the notion of cults could not be very appealing to them. In his next breath, Murray Dale pointed up this very observation.

"Cults don't work," he said. "No cult is capable of an operation like this. Bill Meilen doesn't think it's cults either."

Dale favored the idea of a government conspiracy. He had obviously read more of the American cattle mutilation literature than the other Canadian media people.

"And there's as much evidence to support UFOs as any other theory," he added.

He had all his bases covered. Gail Olson and Linda Howe had nothing on Murray Dale.

We asked him if there had been any UFO sightings in Alberta simultaneous with the cattle mutilations to bear up his interest in UFOs.

"None this year or last," said Murray.

He was quite concerned about a cover-up.

"I'm scared that the cops are supporting a cover-up with this press blackout," he told us. "I mean, they've successfully put the lid on it. They aren't even being asked any questions anymore."

He told us about the film on cattle mutilations he had made for CFCN.

"We dressed a bunch of people up in hooded robes. We did it in the middle of the night," he said. He was proud of it. "We rigged a helicopter for a UFO effect, you know, cults in helicopters that looked like UFOs? We had a dead bull, and we duplicated a mutilation. We actually did it. It took us hours. The anus part was really difficult."

In a conspiratorial tone, chuckling, Dale told us about how he had interviewed Corporal Lauber for the film. "I must admit, I did take a comment of his out of context, out of confidence, too. Strictly for dramatic effect. I asked him one of those questions, you know, about UFOs, the kind of question there's no right answer to? Something like 'Do you agree that given the evidence at hand it's impossible at this point to say for sure that UFOs are *not* to blame for cattle mutilations?' Heh, heh. Lauber hated it. What could he do but say yes? He begged me to turn off the camera. But I wouldn't do it." Dale sounded really pleased with himself.

It was probably newsmen like Murray Dale that had caused Lauber to shut off all RCMP contact with the press. It was a cheap trick, yet Dale seemed surprised that RCMP had stopped speaking with the media.

Ultimately, though, what mattered was the end result. By being cute and seeking to manipulate Corporal Lauber for no good reason except to insert a sensationalistic note about flying saucers into his film, Dale had probably helped turn the RCMP information flow off for the reporters in two countries. We couldn't help thinking that people like Dale and Linda Howe would last about three seconds in the TV news business in New York before they were canned, blackballed, and never seen on the air again.

The Lesson Of The Lawyer's Wife

We now began a round of long-distance telephone calls to everyone we wanted to interview on our trip. We had set up our intinerary: Canada, to see Corporal Lauber and Dr. David Green, the RCMP veterinary pathologist; Montana, to speak with Captain Keith Wolverton of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office, the man who had led the investigation of the 1975 cattle mutilations in Montana and had co-authored *Mystery Stalks the Prairie*, and a toxicologist named Herb Anderson who was also interested in the mutilations; Wyoming, to interview Dr. Leo Sprinkle, the hypnotic UFO regression specialist who had appeared in "Strange Harvest"; Colorado, where we would spend most of the time

meeting with Linda Howe, Carl Whiteside of the CBI again, George Erianne, the private detective in Colorado Springs who claimed to have inside information on Dane Edwards and on the mutilations that pointed toward a secret government CB warfare operation, Dorothy Aldridge of the *Gazette-Telegraph*, Bob Blake, whose horse had reportedly been mutilated in April, David Perkins, who lived in something called the Libre Commune in Farisita, Colorado, and Lou Girodo, the DA's investigator from Trinidad, Colorado, who had appeared in Linda Howe's film; New Mexico, where we would talk with District Attorney Eloy Martinez in Santa Fe, the man who had gotten the L.E.A.A. grant for Ken Rommel's investigation, Ken Rommel himself, Gabe Valdez, and Howard Burgess again; Texas, where we would finally come face to face with Tom Adams, the Father of Mutology and publisher of *Stigmata;* Arkansas, to see Benton County Sheriff Claude Penn, Don Rystrom, the former deputy who had been the center of the cattle mutilations in that area, Doug Fogley, the state police officer, Dr. Nancy Owen, and the two veterinarians, Dr. Hatfield and Dr. Gary France; and finally Iowa, to meet with Dr. John Andrews, the Iowa State University veterinary pathologist, and Agent Joe Motsinger of the Iowa Department of Criminal Investigation.

The trip would involve a full month on the road.

Along with gathering as much new first-hand information as we could, we would also be searching for places in which the actual reality of the cattle mutilation issue conflicted with the dramatic image of it presented in press reports, articles, and the descriptions by mutologists. So far, the world of cattle mutilations had turned out to be very different from the way it first looked to us.

This reversal of our initial image of both the mutilation phenomenon and the people involved in it was almost total. The thousands of cattle mutilations now looked more like thousands of unconfirmed reports accepted by a mutology network which had virtually no standards by which to determine the difference between a questionable claim and a proven fact.

We wanted to see if all the people we talked to actually held the same beliefs, the same positions that were assigned to them in the drama of the mute saga as told by people like Linda Howe and David Perkins. In other words, was Keith Wolverton in Montana really a UFO believer, as his book indicated, or had this role been foisted on him by the way the network told his story? Was Leo Sprinkle really a competent psychologist, or was he a marginal crank who just happened to have a Ph.D.? We were out, at last, to try to discover exactly what was real and what was not.

We were reminded of an apocryphal story told about the late Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, meant to illustrate what a fine lawyer Douglas was beneath his judicial robes. Its point was a small lesson in keen and unclouded observation unspoiled by unwarranted conclusions. The story went like this:

One sunny day, Douglas and his young wife were riding through the Midwest in a train. Mrs. Douglas looked out the window and saw some sheep grazing on a hillside. The sheep's wool was close-cropped and they looked scrawny and crew-cut. She nudged her husband.

"Look, Bill," she said, "they've shorn the sheep." Douglas leaned over and looked out the window for several seconds in silence. He turned back to his wife and said, very gently,

"You are mistaken, my dear. It *appears* that the sheep have been shorn *on the side facing us,*" and went back to reading his book.

The sheep in the story were exactly like the thousands of reportedly mutilated cattle. So many people had assumed that because there appeared to be smooth wounds on the carcasses the work had been surgically performed by humans or other types of beings. In almost all the cases they had done this without bothering to seek definitive analysis of the animal or its circumstances. Like the justice's wife, they had seen the *appearance* of shorn sheep and made a conclusion that was unwarranted, based on ignorance and on the small amount of evidence they had seen. This principle extended to every aspect of the cattle mutilation issue.

The lesson of the lawyer's wife, we believed, was the key to understanding the mystery once and for all. Somebody had to go out there and look at the other side of those apparently naked sheep.

BOOK TWO

III. THE GRAND TOUR

1

Preflight

The Last Man On The Moon

It was now late July, 1980. We were due to leave on our month-long trip on the third of August, but before we could go we had to make a short hop to Washington, D.C., to interview U.S. Senator Harrison Schmitt.

The mutology network and the press had taken full note of Schmitt's involvement with the cattle mutilations, seeing it as an endorsement of their beliefs and theories about UFOs and government conspiracies. After all, if the senator took the mutilations seriously, then he had to take *them* seriously, which meant he agreed with their ideas. Right?

He became their hero, and the fact that he was also an astronaut, a real spaceman who had been to the moon, only made them attach themselves to him all the more.

We, however, had our doubts about the mutology network's reading of the senator's interest. As far as we could tell, Schmitt had been approached by his constituents and made aware that they were concerned with what appeared to be a problem with cattle mutilations. According to his remarks at the conference, he saw this as a criminal problem, something akin to rustling or full-scale vandalism. He did not refer to it as a "pattern of seemingly supernormal events," or as a "bizarre mystery," or as a "weird and baffling phenomenon." He called it a crime, which implied that he felt that *if* it was being committed, it was being committed by humans for some reason. And the "if" in his position was quite clear. He had *not* called the conference to acknowledge the bizarre and mysterious mutes once and for all as a paranormal dilemma which now should be accepted as such by the U.S. government. He had called the conference to gather intelligence about the mutilations, to see who would show up, to find out what various people thought. Schmitt had also talked of trying to get the United States Department of Justice involved in investigating the cattle mutilations—proof that he viewed the entire issue not as a supernormal manifestation, but as a possible *crime*. If Schmitt had been endorsing the notion of flying saucers, he would have tried to involve the Air Force instead. The mutologists' use of the Schmitt conference to endorse their wild theories was completely off base.

Unfortunately, Schmitt's role as the hero of the UFO/conspiracy mutologists got another boost when the Rommel Report came out. Although Schmitt had not made any direct statements rejecting Rommel's findings, he had expected the report to turn out differently and noted that he thought Rommel might have ignored much of the context around the mutilations. Yet he always hung back from any direct denunciation of the report.

Of course, Senator Schmitt was a politician: he couldn't afford to be made a fool of. We had a feeling that the reason Schmitt had not made any definitive denunciation of the Rommel Report was that if he had, then he would have had to back it up with facts. And Rommel's report seemed to indicate that the facts all pointed against a widespread criminal action as the reason for the cattle mutilations. We sensed that the senator was in a bind.

It also seemed to us that Schmitt had gotten involved on good faith. His constituents had complained to him and, like a good, responsive politician, he had taken them seriously. He had been confronted with a respected state police officer, Gabe Valdez, who had had personal experience with these frightening cattle mutilations. Senator Schmitt had no reason to disbelieve the officer. So, between his rancher constituents' complaints and Valdez's professional insistence that the problem was great, wide, and mysterious, the senator had decided to stick his own neck out and get involved. He had held the conference, an acknowledgment that as far as he could tell, *judging from the information he had been given*, there was something to the cattle mutilations.

Then, along came Rommel's report: reported mutilations turn out to be mistaken predator damage; ranchers' claims of surgical mutilation are unreliable; and worse, Officer Valdez, who had helped convince the senator to accept the strangeness of the cattle mutilations, was incapable of telling an observation from an unsupported conclusion, was given to inserting unproved allegations into official reports, and believed everything told to him by a manipulative fellow named Howard Burgess. The senator likely saw that he had been sucked into something under false pretenses. He had believed the wrong people, Valdez and the ranchers.

So Schmitt, we believed, had done the next best thing to silence or denunciation: he had preserved his image by mildly criticizing the Rommel Report not in terms of its content, but in terms of what it might have left out. He said he would release a full, formal statement when he had read the report.

We had our doubts about this. We had a feeling that he would just let the whole thing cool over a period of months, that he would never make a sharp denunciation of Rommel's report. He would probably end up privately agreeing with Rommel's findings, but he could never publicly say so.

Over the last several months, we had built up a relationship over the phone with Julian Barber, the senator's press secretary. Barber was friendly and smooth, a man with an easy professional air, a mellifluous baritone and a Southern drawl. Ever since the 1979 conference, Barber had been forced to field dozens of inquiries and offers of "help" from the senator's new coterie of admirers. Peter Jordan had tried to interest Schmitt in reading transcripts of his psychic's reading on the cattle mutilations. Tom Adams had faithfully begun supplying the senator's office with fresh copies of *Stigmata*. Intermittently, journalists had been telephoning for interviews. Barber didn't quite know what to make of it, but he certainly wasn't allowing anyone like Gail Olson or Tom Adams in to see the senator. After several months of telephone conversation, Barber had finally understood that we were not UFO buffs, not fans of the paranormal or conspiracies, and simply wanted an interview. When we asked him, he readily consented.

We were greeted at Schmitt's office by Julian Barber. Tall, fiftyish, and fit, with a mane of silver hair, he looked exactly as he sounded over the phone. Senator Schmitt emerged from his office and ushered us inside. He is a dark, compact man with the aura of an athlete, not small, but not too tall to fit the cramped confines of an Apollo capsule. Schmitt did not seem terribly glad to see us, but he was not hostile, either. He told us about how he had become aware of the cattle mutilation issue in New Mexico.

"I first began to hear about it when I got involved with politics back in 1975," he explained. "I heard about cattle mutilations all during my campaign, from ranchers, cattlemen, Indians, a few veterinarians, people who have contact with the cattle business.

"Over the next few years, I kept hearing the reports," he said. "Every once in a while there would be a flurry somewhere in the state, and someone would tell me about it."

Finally, Schmitt got together with the U.S. attorney for New Mexico, R. E. Thompson, and they decided to co-sponsor the Albuquerque conference in 1979.

"We knew that most of the reports were probably predator damage," Schmitt explained, "but there seemed to be a small percentage that had the ranchers really upset. They were convinced that something was going on.

"We decided to hold the conference as a first step toward trying to interest the Justice Department in investigating this thing in an organized, scientific fashion.

"The purpose of the conference," said Schmitt, "was to clear the air."

We asked the senator what he thought of Rommel's report.

"I thought it was fairly well written," he answered. "But it certainly doesn't answer all of the questions.

"Look," said the senator. "I'm sure that Rommel's findings are accurate. I would tend to agree that most cases of reported animal mutilations probably fall into the same category as the cases he investigated, animal activity reported as mutilations.

"But there are still a few that are hard to pass off," he said.

He seemed to have reached the same conclusions we had.

Schmitt explained, again, that the only reason he had become involved in the mutilation issue in the first place was to try to get some kind of systematic, organized investigation going, to resolve the question once and for all. The problem was that the Justice Department simply wasn't interested enough to mount an investigation. Schmitt felt that maybe with a new Republican administration he could get the support of the department.

He noted the importance of what he called "personalities" in the furor of discontent surrounding Rommel and his report. He did not offer any details, but we knew that he was referring to the way Rommel had obviously gone after the credibility of Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess, among others, and the way Rommel seemed to have alienated some of the press in New Mexico.

"It did appear to me that Rommel had reached his conclusions before he even started his investigation. This, as you know, might tend to defeat a scientific conclusion."

Beyond that, Schmitt said, "I don't intend to make any official statement on the Rommel Report."

We then discussed what seemed to be a common confusion on the part of cattle mutilation buffs, journalists, and the public. Because Schmitt's conference had taken place at the end of April, 1979, and DA Eloy Martinez's L.E.A.A. grant for Rommel's investigation had come through and been announced only two weeks later, most people were under the impression that there was a connection between Schmitt's conference and Rommel's investigation.

Actually, as Schmitt explained with a touch of annoyance, Martinez's L.E.A.A. grant had been applied for in February of 1979, absolutely independently of Schmitt's conference. There was no connection between the senator's interest and the Rommel investigation. In fact, there was little connection between Martinez and Rommel and the senator. They just happened to be working independently on the same problem.

Perhaps local politics played a far greater part in the cattle mutilation issue than anyone had ever observed, and this might account for Schmitt's quandary. Everywhere the mutilation phenomenon had cropped up it had become an issue in the local political arena. Politics was a force capable of profound effects on the entire shape of the phenomenon in specific areas. Anything that became a political football would be used, distorted, and manipulated by the players to serve their own interests.

Why, in fact, had Eloy Martinez applied for the L.E.A.A. grant in the first place? If the grant was like any other kind of Federal grant, the simple act of applying for and receiving it would be a small gold star for the politician who engineered the deal, and that engineer was Eloy Martinez. After all, the cattle mutilation issue was a good deal easier to handle to one's benefit than the investigation of a real, live issue involving a human murder or a scandal of some sort. In a way, it was a cheap shot, an easy out. By claiming responsibility for the investigation that rid the area of the cattle mutilation "mystery" once and for all, Martinez could conceivably make some political points. A political broth like this would account for the senator's reluctance to talk.

Jay's Journal

In the last few days before our trip began, situations seemed to be conspiring to complicate our job. We spoke with Tom Adams, and he told us that one of his Canadian contacts had picked up a fascinating tidbit from the rumor mill in Alberta.

The RCMP was still pressing its investigation into the involvement of local blood cults in the mutilations in Canada. Adams had heard they were "zeroing in" on a non-fiction paperback book called *Jay's Journal*, which supposedly contained a first-hand account by an American teenager who had become involved with a black witchcraft cult and had actually participated in ritualistic cattle mutilations in Colorado as part of the group's rites. The RCMP, so the story went, was hoping to find some clues in the book that might aid their case. When we called Corporal Lauber in Calgary to confirm our arrival in a few days, he confirmed this. They did have the book, and were trying to see if it would be of use to them.

Here were cults again, and this time the source was specific and the references could be traced. *Jay's Journal* had been edited by a child psychologist named Beatrice Sparks, who had established an excellent reputation with her prior book about adolescent emotional problems, *Go Ask Alice*. It chronicled a fifteen-year-old's emotional crack-up, culminating in a drug overdose. Since its initial publication, *Go Ask Alice* had sold several hundred thousand copies, had been reprinted several times, and had been made into a film.

Apparently, *Jay's Journal* was a similar book, but concerned with a teenager who became involved with occult practices instead of drugs. Sparks had edited and pseudonymously published his diaries, which had been brought to her by the boy's parents after he had committed suicide.

We phoned Beatrice Sparks at her home in Utah. Yes, she told us, the RCMP had spoken with her. She was helpful, but there were tight limits on what she could tell us. *Jay's Journal* had been published under a pseudonym, and certain events and individuals had been camouflaged in order to protect the identity of the dead boy and his family. Consequently, Sparks could not hand us any leads for further research into the events described in the book, or anything that might enable us to deduce the boy's home state.

Sparks told us that during the course of her research for the book she had gone out and interviewed many high school kids about the prevalence of occult practices in their high schools, including some of Jay's friends. What she found had frightened her: a widespread pattern of occult practice which pointed far beyond Jay and his friends.

We knew that Sparks was a reputable professional, yet some of the things she told us were almost too shocking to believe. She told us that most of the teenagers she spoke to readily admitted that the practice of "witchcraft" was widespread in their communities.

"When it comes to this subject, the kids are scared to death," she said. "They really don't want to talk about it. I don't understand what they're afraid of, but they said things to me like, 'You don't want to know too much about this, because you might be putting yourself or your family in danger.' "

To us, this did not sound like the benign traditional witchcraft we had studied, but like some hybrid of Satanism or black arts practice. The kids might have been fooling with so-called evil powers and, more than likely, with some evil people who would be the type that got involved with occult practice in order to try to gain power of some sort over others for the purposes of personal gain, manipulation, and sex.

She had asked a friend of Jay's about some of the terms used in the book. "It was like pulling teeth from this kid," Sparks told us. "He just didn't want to talk."

Then Sparks told us that some of the kids involved with these occult practices had demonstrated what they called their "powers" to her.

"I actually saw them levitate coins and straighten bobby pins without touching them," she told us. We were incredulous. "I know," she said. "It sounds impossible. I thought it was a trick. I even gave them a bobby pin from my own hair, just to be sure it wasn't some kind of trick. They bent it. They claimed they had gotten these powers from the 'witchcraft' they had been using."

We really did not know what to think. Sparks is an accredited child psychologist and a Mormon. Straighter than that you can't get. But what she was telling us was right out of *Carrie* or *The Midwich Cuckoos*.

"They were just regular high school kids," she kept saying. "They seemed perfectly normal."

Sparks had gone to a high school in Wyoming and asked the kids there about witchcraft.

"There had been cattle mutilations reported in this area," she said. Again, the kids were afraid to talk. But they did say there was occult practice in their school, and they insisted that some cattle mutilations were related to this kind of "witchcraft."

Sparks felt that the kids became involved with the occult because they were looking for something exciting and dangerous. "To Jay it was wondrous, he saw possibilities with these powers to do extraordinary things," she said.

She believed that whatever it was he had been involved with, he had committed suicide because he was no longer controlling it, it was controlling him.

"I don't exactly know what to make of this," she said. "But I spoke to kids in four different states, and they all said they had witchcraft in their schools. Some of the kids admitted to sacrificing small animals like cats and dogs in their rituals." Those kids had really frightened her. She wasn't sure what was going on, but whatever it was, "these kids were not wise enough to use it."

We talked about the role of cattle mutilations in all this.

"I think these kids have the mutilation method down pat," she said. The description in Jay's diary indicated this.

"I think that the similarity of the cattle mutilation techniques in so many different places indicates that there's some central organization to these cults," she said. "Either that, or these cult groups talk to each other and pass the techniques around."

"I also think there have to be adults involved in this at some level," said Sparks. This, we agreed, was a distinct possibility. After all, Charles Manson was in his thirties when he brought his "family" together, and many of its members were young kids just barely out of high school. Since sex often plays a part in hybrid fringe cults like these, there was a solid motivation for hungry occult-oriented adults to draw some willing young bodies into their practices.

One thing was certain: what Jay had been involved with, and what Sparks was describing, was definitely not formalized witchcraft or Wicca. There is no animal sacrifice in those practices. They are basically peaceful nature religions. A hybrid cult put together from a pastiche of black magic, Satanism, voodoo, Santeria, and other practices could take any form imaginable, and could include anything from cattle mutilations to human sacrifice.

Sparks sent us a copy of the book. When we read it we were fascinated and a bit shaken. It gave us more insight into the kinds of cult activity that might account for the few actual "classic" mutilations. Jay had been a good kid from an upstanding family, an excellent student, president of his school debating club, a winner of scholastic awards, a real achiever. The kid had also had obvious problems, both of his own and with his family.

After getting involved with drugs, Jay was caught by his father and sent away to an expensive private reform school. While he was there one of the teachers, an older man, introduced Jay and some of the other kids to occult practices. Jay practiced the techniques taught him, and soon claimed to be able to levitate coins and pens by psychokinesis.

After a few months, Jay left the school and returned home. The teacher kept contact with him and kept feeding him more and more on occult practices.

The book chronicles Jay's involvement with the darker side of the occult. His own adolescent fears are assuaged by what is seen to be an easy way to power and sexual mastery. That, mixed with hallucinogens, reduces him to a mindless pawn.

"I feel like I'm drowning, being sucked under in some way that I cannot understand," he writes in his journal. "But it's so thrilling, so exciting, so exotically and hypnotically compelling . . . I'm beginning to live for my O experiences." It is at this point that a friend introduces Jay and his two best friends Dell and Brad to something called Bootan, supposedly a magic practice which will yield even more power than voodoo to their cult, called simply "O." In order to accomplish its initiation ceremony, they need certain parts from certain animals. They need the eyes, sex organs, and blood of a cow. The four of them drive to Colorado for a weekend to kill and mutilate some cattle to get the parts they need.

Jay graphically describes the cattle mutilations. They find the "right bull," and the Bootan expert, Mel, brings it down by stunning it with what Jay calls an "electric arrow made from a many-times increased battery-powered cattle prodder, but with a charge strong enough to stun said bull."

Jay writes that they made "precise little surgical cuts in exactly the right places." They siphoned off some blood into gallon jars. "Like a surgeon," Mel "cut out the eyes, tongue, and balls."

Here it was, the mutilation *phenomenon* in action. Assuming that Jay's journal entry was true, who really knew how many of the reported mutilations might actually have been the work of kids or other cultists like Jay and his friends? And here was one of them spouting real, Grade A Tom Adams and *Rio Grande Sun* cattle mutilation lore. Had Mel's friends, who had introduced him to cattle mutilations in 1975, gotten the idea from the newspapers, or was it cult mutilations like theirs which had provided the initial events for the newspapers to report on? Who could tell? But here was the interface where the news reports and rumors, the lore of cattle mutilations mixed with and affected the actions of the people who might be responsible for the few actual cattle mutilations among all those reported.

Jay seemed to have second-guessed many factors about the mutilations.

"Mel had his knives so sharp they had gone through the cow's hide almost without effort and each cut had been *so clean and almost bloodless that I had been amazed*." (Italics ours) "A few flies on the cuts and no one would ever know what happened except that parts were missing and that jars and jars of blood had disappeared," wrote Jay.

They actually drank the blood of the third animal directly from its open vein, which they slit with "the tiniest little incision."

In the weeks that followed, Jay writes that he, Brad, and Dell all became depressed, afraid, and physically ill. Ultimately, the three of them vowed to desert O and return to the church. Jay became more physically ill.

A few days later, his friend Brad is killed in a freak car accident. Most significant to Jay is that Brad is killed by a crushing blow from the vehicle's bumper to his right temple, the spot where they all had pointed their fingers when they made the vow to O.

Five days later, his friend Dell is killed, also in a freakish auto accident, also by a blow to the right temple. Dell's car had broken down, and he had left it and walked down the shoulder of the highway to get help. He got a piece of gravel in his shoe and sat down to take it out. Just then, according to Jay's entry, a car full of kids came along. Both the driver of the car and the other teenagers in the car swore that "some force" grabbed the steering wheel and wrenched it to the right. This is too much for Jay, who absolutely accepts that the meaning of these two deaths from blows to the right temple were due to Dell's and Brad's desire to escape from their involvement in occult practice. Jay believes that the punishment for trying to escape is death. In fact, his girlfriend, Tina, had told him, "Once you're in you can't get out."

Tina keeps trying to convince Jay to return to the O cult. He keeps refusing. Finally, leaving a note which ends "I'm not free, I feel ill, and I'm sad and I'm lonely," Jay points his father's .22 pistol at his temple, his right temple, of course, and pulls the trigger.

It was some story. Throughout, it was obvious that Jay was a very troubled kid who had successfully hidden the worst of his devastating emotional problems from everyone around him. Throughout the *Journal*, Jay's lack of insight into his dilemma is plain, as is his profound emotional instability. Since Jay used drugs and "potions" throughout the entire time he made his journal entries, it was impossible to tell whether the strange claims he makes might have been real or the result of drug-induced hallucinations, or the result of the disintegration of his own consciousness, which is also quite clear throughout the book.

None of these things, however, negated the chillingly accurate description of the cattle mutilations in the book. And none of it negated the fact that Jay and many other kids in his conservative community were passionately involved in delving into occult practices in a fevered adolescent search for power, or understanding, or as an act of religious, social, and sexual rebellion. Perhaps the connection between Jay's, and possibly other cults', isolated cattle mutilations was an instance of two separate neo-religious manifestations feeding on one another. The mutology buffs and journalists believed in mysterious cattle mutilations. The blood cultists got ideas from them and went out to mutilate a few cattle, thereby providing the few cases where there was some real proof that the animals had been victims of human action and not predators. This cycle pulsed along at enough of a rate to insure that both would continue to feed each other. All this would be adequate to keep us awake at night all through our trip.

There was one last complication before the trip began. One of us would have to stay behind in New York for the first ten days or so. Since we had been processing everything as a team for upwards of eight months now, this opportunity to separate our joint perceptions might be a welcome shift in perspective. Summers would stay behind and take care of some business in New York while Kagan struck out for Calgary, Alberta, Montana, and Wyoming. We would meet in Denver after about ten days to compare notes and continue on together.

2

Canada

RCMP

When Kagan left for Calgary on Sunday, August 3, 1980, the air in New York felt as hot as the exhaust from the jets at Kennedy Airport. When he landed at Calgary International Airport a few hours later, the temperature was 40 degrees. He could see his breath; he was confronted with the reality of being in a foreign country. When he called the RCMP headquarters to set up an appointment with Corporal Lauber, the switchboard informed him that today was an official holiday, Heritage Day, commemorating the founding of the province of Alberta. It was the equivalent of the Fourth of July, and no one would be coming to work, so he had time to decompress, nurse his jet lag, and wander around to get the feel of the locale.

The next morning he connected with Lauber. Lauber agreed to give him a few hours. Dr. David Green, the veterinary pathologist who worked with the RCMP, would also be there later in the morning.

The Calgary headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was a modern institutional building of tan brick. In fact, true to the rule of modern architecture, it was freely interchangeable with the headquarters of the CBI in Denver. Both structures could have been designed and built by the same person, or, more likely, the same committee.

In the lobby was a tall oil painting of the traditional Mountie, standing astride a dark hilltop in his crimson coat, wide-brimmed hat, Sam Browne belt, blue breeches, and riding boots.

There was no one in the building wearing a red coat, though, and there were no horses tethered outside. There had been a few menacing-looking police cruisers in the parking lot with the RCMP emblem on their doors, and a few men in natty blue uniforms who looked like state police troopers. In the building, men in suits and shirtsleeves sat at desks and walked around with papers in their hands.

Lynn Lauber greeted Kagan in the lobby and brought him into his office. He was not wearing a red coat or drill instructor's hat either: he was wearing a green sport jacket. Lauber was very tall, six feet three or four, lanky, and slope-shouldered. He was the kind of man who seems to wear a perpetually worried expression, and, with his small, clipped moustache, he looked more like a banker or an accountant than a member of one of the toughest police forces in the world.

In fact, Lauber *was* a bit worried. He was still concerned about the secrecy of Kagan's visit; he definitely did not want the local press to find out that the RCMP had been talking to any writers. Kagan reassured him again: nothing would come out until the book was published. Here was the same mistrust we had encountered during our first research trip; everyone who had ever been connected with cattle mutilations was leery of strangers for one reason or another.

Lauber gave Kagan a brief history of how the cattle mutilation issue had developed in Alberta.

The first reported mutilation had been in August of 1979 near a small town called Blackie, southeast of Calgary. We had seen the news clippings on this one. The six-year-old bull was a Simmental breed, what is known as an "exotic," an expensive animal imported for breeding purposes. It was owned by a man named Don Seney and was being kept and pastured by a farmer named Chuck Willoughby, a former Calgary city policeman. The bull had been found dead in its pasture, its scrotum and testicles gone, as well as its penis sheath, most of its penis, two nipples, part of an ear and part of its tongue and rectum. The newspaper accounts stated that both the RCMP and a veterinarian who had examined the bull agreed that it was obvious that the animal had been mutilated with a sharp instrument and not torn up by predators. The bull had last been seen alive the night before it was found. No special tests had been done to establish that the bull had been mutilated. The judgment had been made strictly on the basis of an inspection of the carcass.

"We didn't recognize it as part of anything like a cattle mutilation phenomenon," Lauber explained. "No one up here knew anything about the whole cattle mutilation myth that had developed in the States. To us it was just a strange occurrence. This bull was very obvious, though," Lauber repeated. "You could tell just by looking at it that the work had been done with a knife."

The cause of the bull's death had never been established, but the veterinarian had decided that the bull was dead before it was cut. According to the newspaper, the RCMP investigators had found tire tracks leading into and out of the pasture, but none within 150 feet of the animal.

"They used a car or a truck," Lauber told Kagan. "The tracks clearly showed where the bull had been herded around and around in a circle by the vehicle before it was brought down."

There had been a certain naiveté about the RCMP's initial approach to the first few reported mutilations in 1979. One of the newspaper articles had even ended with an appeal for information to ranchers and farmers and Lauber's office phone number at RCMP Headquarters.

Within a few weeks, more and more mutilated cattle began to be reported. In a few cases, the RCMP had found evidence that animals had been shot, and in two cases cows had been sexually abused in some way. Very quickly, things began to become unclear. Most of the reported mutilations were questionable; they looked like natural death and predator damage. Everyone, including the RCMP, was mystified.

"We still didn't know we were encountering anything with some kind of history," said Lauber. "Then we got a phone call from an American woman tourist. She had come through the area and had read a few of the newspaper articles. She called us and told us about the mutilation waves down in the States. At this point we started checking into it."

So, apparently, had some Alberta newspaper reporters. The cycle of the press-fed cattle mutilation panic had begun to appear.

"This thing only began to assume any kind of size after everyone here found out about the cattle mutilation history from the States," Lauber explained.

Here was an example of how the influence of the mutilation myth affected not only public consciousness, but also directly affected the number of reported mutilations. Canada was a perfect test case.

The number of 1979 reports began to build, and the rumors began. The RCMP immediately began using a veterinary pathologist, Dr. David Green, from the provincial agricultural laboratory at Airdrie, to examine reported mutilations for signs of human knife work. The RCMP crime labs and the Airdrie lab were put to work analyzing tissue samples for any drug traces.

Meanwhile, the RCMP began searching for possible leads into the few mutilations they were sure had been performed purposely by humans.

"Cults came up as suspects," said Lauber, "because we had an informant. We had been working with this person long before the mutilations started. We had been aware of the cults and observing them for a long time. There was a case up here where someone had stolen the body from a grave, apparently for use in a cult ritual. This guy had been working with us on that when the mutilations started. Coincidentally, he started coming through with information on cults using animals at the same time the mutilations were all over the papers here."

Lauber went on to explain that the RCMP was aware of seventeen active cults in Alberta.

"Most of them have branches in Calgary. We don't know which one or ones is responsible for any mutilations.

"We have been told that they use the parts taken from the mutilated cattle in their rituals," he said. Lauber seemed reluctant to divulge too much about the RCMP's investigation into cults and cattle mutilations, perhaps because it was an open investigation and he didn't want to jeopardize his case. Lauber also wanted to protect his informant.

"Look," he said. "This guy is in the know. He's accurate. I can't say any more about his identity. All I can tell you is that he's very close to the real cult activity here. But even being that close, he's not sure who's doing it. We haven't infiltrated any of the cults yet, so we have no day-to-day inside information. There's nothing specific yet."

Lauber went on to demonstrate that he did, however, understand quite well the nature of modern cult groups. "Few if any of these groups practice any 'pure' forms of ritual," he said. "They're all offshoots of offshoots. At least one in Alberta is Satanic in nature, but that can mean almost anything. We're also suspicious of any cults with roots in ancient religions that incorporated sacrifice into their rites."

It was nice to be interviewing a man who had done his homework.

"Actually," Lauber said, "only two of the seventeen local cults have possible roots in any traditions that might use animal mutilation."

"There's a lot you're not telling, isn't there?" asked Kagan.

Lauber smiled. "Yes," he said.

Kagan asked Lauber about Professor Bill Meilen, the drama teacher quoted in the *Edmonton Sun*.

Lauber laughed out loud. "He called me once on the phone," he said. "He kept me on the line for about two hours. I was not impressed with him, he is not a cult expert, and he never worked closely with the RCMP."

Kagan asked Lauber about a story Meilen had told in the newspaper, of an unborn calf that had been removed from its mother and mutilated inside its amniotic sac, while the sac remained unbroken. The tale sounded like real mutologist material, extremely weird and implying some bizarre surgical power, possibly extraterrestrial in nature.

Lauber regretted even telling Meilen that story. Meilen had gotten it all wrong. A pregnant cow had expelled its stillborn calf, and the amnion had remained unbroken, a common occurrence. The cow died while giving birth. The calf was not mutilated. There was nothing at all unusual about the case. Meilen had simply altered it to fit the mold of strangeness.

Here was another example of the way facts became completely distorted within the mutilation phenomenon. Lauber had told one story, Meilen had altered it to an inaccurate version that supported the aura of strangeness around the mutilation phenomenon, the *Edmonton Sun* had printed Meilen's bizarre account as if it were true, and the Stateside mutologists had a new omen of superhuman saucer pilot handiwork to add to their mystery of the century. Obviously the work of extraterrestrials! We could just see Tom Adams adding the new attribute to the official description of the classic mutilation: "The mysterious mutilators were able to mute an unborn calf without breaking the amniotic sac that surrounded it."

By the end of 1979, over 150 cattle mutilations had been reported in Alberta. Typically, almost all of them had either been so long dead and decomposing that it was unbelievable anyone could think they had been surgically incised, or had been mistaken cases of predator damage. Of all these, only three had been confirmed as actual mutilations. Lab work showed that the animals had died from overdoses of the tranquilizer Ketamine, a controlled substance, but available from both veterinary and medical sources to anyone who wanted it badly enough.

Lauber explained that the lab had been specifically looking for Ketamine and several other drugs in the animals found with knife cuts. He had consulted with toxicologists and it was agreed that the tests would be aimed at locating drugs that were not obscure, were frequently used in veterinary medicine, and metabolized very quickly. Only Ketamine and a few others fit these requirements. Lauber had also consulted with some American law enforcement people who had investigated mutilations, notably Steve Watts in Idaho, the man who claimed to have uncovered cattle-mutilating cults in that state in 1975. Watts and several others he did not name had recommended that the RCMP look for Ketamine in mutilated carcasses.

How had the animals been dosed with the drug?

Lauber believed that the cultists were using tranquilizer dart guns.

"They're not controlled like firearms," he explained. "Anyone can buy them, and they're difficult to trace."

By the time the cattle mutilation reports started coming in again in 1980, Lauber was ready. The lab immediately went to work—Dr. Green was involved from the beginning—and the RCMP was extremely careful about talking to the newspapers and TV.

"We saw what happened last year," Lauber explained. "The reporting was inaccurate, the public was needlessly panicked, and we knew that the publicity would bring copycats out of the woodwork to make our job even harder.

"We decided that instead of letting the farmers and ranchers get inaccurate, second-hand information from the newspapers, we would go directly to them and tell them the truth so they could help us. We've been educating the range patrol people about this, and they won't talk to the press either."

It turned out that the ranchers and farmers in Alberta had formed civilian range patrols to keep an eye on cattle and property in the far-flung pastureland. Their batting average had been quite good when it came to the rustling problem.

"These groups are continuously informed by the RCMP as to what to look for when it comes to people mutilating cattle. We keep close contact with them, and there's good cooperation. Actually, they'll probably be the ones to catch cattle mutilators if anyone does,'' said Lauber.

As of August 1, 1980, there had been one hundred reports of mutilated cattle in Alberta that year. Of those, *three* had been confirmed as actual mutilations in which the cause of death had been determined. All these animals had been killed by drug overdoses, probably administered with a dart gun. This year, instead of Ketamine, the cultists had switched to a drug we were familiar with: succinylcholine, the same synthetic curare that had been found in the carcass of the horse in Arkansas in 1978.

Kagan asked Lauber about the standards being used to confirm whether an animal had been mutilated, probably mutilated, or if it might be a copycat job.

''If we can establish the cause of death as any drug, and the animal has proven knife wounds, then it's considered a confirmed mutilation,'' said Lauber. There had been three of these last year, and three in 1980.

''If we cannot establish the cause of death as intentional drug overdose, but the death is *not* due to natural causes, and we *can* confirm knife wounds, the case is rated as a probable mutilation,'' he said. ''And if the death is found to be from natural causes and the knife work is confirmed, it's classified as a copycat, cut up by a prankster after the animal had died on its own.''

Kagan asked Lauber about carcasses supposedly drained of blood, clamp marks, broken bones, strange tripod marks on the ground, odd burns.

''There were no reports of burns, clamp marks, strange bruises, broken legs or broken necks on any of the confirmed mutilations,'' said Lauber. ''None this year or last. And none of the animals was drained of blood. The only marks we've found on the ground near mutilations have been identifiable tire tracks from motor vehicles, and in one or two cases obvious blood trails where the animal was dragged over the ground to the vehicle.''

Any UFO reports?

''None,'' said Lauber.

Kagan asked him about sightings of unmarked mystery helicopters, the kind that Tom Adams so doted on.

''Not one,'' replied Lauber. ''We have helicopter sightings all the time, but we had them before the mutilations started. They're routine. There are 4,600 helicopters registered in the province. We had one report of a chopper down in a field. We checked into it. It turned out that the pilot had engine trouble and a sick passenger. He took off again right away. There was no connection with mutilations.''

The situation in Canada was not following the pattern of American mutilation waves. For one thing, there was limited press coverage, so there was small opportunity for misinformation and unsubstantiated claims to saturate public consciousness and influence perceptions. There was no opportunity for UFO buffs like Gail Olson and Linda Howe to bulldoze the public with unprovable claims disguised as news. The RCMP was doing its best to educate ranchers and farmers so they would not be influenced by rumors and panic. Investigation was centered in one person, Lauber, who was treating all information cautiously and rationally. And most important, with the exception of Bill Meilen in 1979, there were no mutology ''experts'' like Howard Burgess, Tom Adams, and David Perkins spraying their poorly researched theories about radioactive pollution, flying saucers, and death rays out into the mind of the public through newspaper reporters hungry for sensationalistic copy. The cattle mutilation myth, the *phenomenon*, had been unable to make a dent in Canada, and so all the baggage that came with the lore—UFOs, mystery choppers, bloodless carcasses—was conspicuously absent.

Had Lauber read Rommel's report?

''Yes,'' he said. He had also spoken to Rommel as part of his investigation, and had only one comment about the Rommel Report.

''I'd like to see him write off *our* confirmed cases as predators,'' he said.

''In my opinion,'' he said, ''Rommel's report was influenced by local politics. It seems that his project was commissioned expressly to say once and for all that there is simply no such thing as a cattle mutilation performed by human beings. There appears to have been an ulterior motive behind Rommel's report.''

Lauber did not say that Rommel's findings were inaccurate or that his methods were not sound, but he had picked up the same sense we had that perhaps there was more to the project than just an investigation into cattle mutilations, that perhaps Rommel and Martinez were reaping some sort of political gain from it.

Started good then lost there Again in

Kagan asked him how the RCMP had unearthed *Jay's Journal* as a lead in their case.

"Completely by accident," he replied. "One of the officers' wives happened to be reading it and she brought it to our attention." Lauber felt that the description of the cattle mutilations in the book was too accurate to be imaginary. "It had to be true," he said.

A man in a wrinkled green jump suit and a baseball cap walked into Lauber's office and introduced himself as Dr. David Green. This was the veterinary pathologist who had been working with the RCMP and who had made all the determinations on the mutilated cattle.

Green was in his late thirties and had a confident manner that verged on arrogance. He carried himself like the cocky star halfback on a winning high school football team. Kagan could see why Murray Dale had not liked Green: Green could be a threatening character to anyone who was not absolutely sure of his position.

Dr. Green explained that he had been a veterinary pathologist since 1971, when he received his pathology degree. He explained that as far as he knew, there was no official specialty in forensic veterinary pathology, meaning pathology oriented toward unraveling legal and criminal questions connected with animal diseases and deaths, analogous to human forensic pathology.

Green had become involved with the RCMP's investigation by accident. He had been employed at the pathology laboratory at the Alberta Provincial Veterinary Laboratory in Airdrie. The RCMP had come to the lab looking for help in their investigation, and Green happened to be there. He explained that he believed the RCMP might have a good chance of solving the cattle mutilations there.

"They've got more freedom than the FBI," he said. "A hundred percent political backing on whatever they do."

He explained that all investigations into reports of mutilated cattle were carefully coordinated between himself and Corporal Lauber.

"When a mutilation is reported, I immediately call the local veterinarian and tell him what to look for and what samples to take. Lauber explains the necessary investigative techniques to the local police. The samples are sent to me, and I make the final determination."

In 1979, Green had done twenty-four complete necropsies on reportedly mutilated animals, and twenty-four partial necropsies in which he only examined tissue samples and did chemistries on them. This meant that Green had personally analyzed about one-third of all the reportedly mutilated animals in Alberta in 1979. Out of all this work had come only a handful of confirmed cases. So far in 1980, he had necropsied twenty reportedly mutilated cattle.

Kagan asked Green exactly how he had determined that the confirmed mutilations had in fact been cut with sharp instruments, and how he had located the drugs that had caused their deaths.

"Well," said Green, "we found suspected puncture wounds in places that were probably the injection points for the drugs."

Kagan had heard all this before, from the vet reports from Fitzgerald in Colorado and Hatfield in Arkansas. Exactly how had Green known that these sites were injection points?

"There was evidence of extremely rapid autolysis in these animals, and in the areas where they had been injected there was highly localized liquefactive necrosis."

Green said that what caused this was the introduction of a drug, in this case succinylcholine or Ketamine, into the muscle tissue.

"In all of the confirmed mutilations I found evidence of sites like these, highly localized on the dorsal side of the jugular vein, in the right spot for an injection," Green explained. This meant there was a good likelihood that these animals had been injected with some neuroactive drugs at that point.

The bodies of all the confirmed mutilations were also hyperthermic, Green said. This meant that in the tissues of the few actually mutilated animals, the temperature was elevated measurably beyond what it should have been in a decomposing carcass. This, Green explained, was also due to the action of drugs like succinylcholine and Ketamine. Green explained that in the mutilated animals where he had been able to identify drug residues and knife damage, this hyperthermia was a further indication that the animal had been brought down by a drug that interfered with its normal neuromuscular functioning.

"Succinylcholine is very hard to identify," Green said. "After it's metabolized it is broken down into substances that resemble the normal byproducts of body metabolism. It doesn't leave behind any telltale chemicals that are easily identified.

"Ketamine, though, is a phencycladine derivative. It's chemically related to PCP, a common animal tranquilizer."

Dr. Green was becoming progressively more talkative. Now he began to outline his ideas about circumstances surrounding the mutilated cattle.

"From what I've seen," he said, "I'd say there's strong evidence that someone's going out and shooting these animals down with a tranquilizer dart gun. Let's put it this way: there's strong evidence in favor of it, and absolutely no evidence pointing in any other directions."

Green explained that the entire province of Alberta was evenly divided into one-by-two-mile rectangles by a network of blacktopped and graveled country roads. In addition to these roads, there were hundreds of smaller dirt and grass roads between them, making it extremely easy for someone in a car or truck to reach almost any piece of pasture. The point was that no one needed a helicopter or aircraft to get near cattle in order to dart them and mutilate them.

"We've been finding very few tracks around the carcasses," he explained, "with the exception of the vehicle tire tracks. But there's nothing unusual about this. Where there are no tracks, the ground has usually been too hard to take them, or we've found evidence that any tracks have been trampled out by the rest of the herd milling around the dead animal.

"And by the way," he added, "there's been no evidence of predators refusing to touch the carcasses of confirmed mutilated animals." Predators would chew on a mutilated carcass as easily as on one that had died from natural causes. In fact, Green pointed out that some of his necropsies on what turned out to be confirmed mutilations had been made more complicated by the fact that some of the knife work had been obscured by tooth and beak damage from predators which had eaten the edges of the knife wounds.

"The knife work is slick," Green explained. "The cutters are skilled. *But the skill is not beyond the skill of an experienced hunter or veterinarian.*"

In other words, there was no super surgery of the type the mutologist network loved to label as "beyond the skill of any means known to man."

"There's no hesitation in the knife strokes," he went on, "even though it's done under poor field conditions, dim light and like that. But, again, you'd only have to practice it two or three times to attain the necessary skill," he said.

Green was particularly impressed with the eye removal surgery on a few of the carcasses. "It was not crude, but very skilled," he said. "In fact, I could tell that whoever did it used what is called the range method, a basic technique used to remove a diseased eye from cattle in the pasture. Essentially you just hold open the lid and cut around the eye to remove it. It's commonly used on cattle with carcinoma, severe pink eye, or traumatic eye damage."

Kagan wondered how the Canadian cattle mutilators had learned these techniques. Was it possible that there might be a veterinarian or a veterinary student involved with the cults?

"That is not beyond the realm of possibility," Green answered.

Kagan wanted to see how Dr. Green would account for some of the questions raised by his sureness that cults were to blame for the few confirmed mutilations he had seen. Why, for instance, wouldn't the cultists just buy the animal parts they needed cheaply from a slaughterhouse?

"Because the killing and mutilation is part of the ritual. We think it's necessary to the ritual that removal must be done by the cultists themselves while the animal is alive and tranquilized. Cattle are expensive, they cost anywhere from $500 to $900, so they wouldn't be able to afford to buy an animal just to mutilate it. It's easier for them to kill and mutilate someone else's animal."

How could Green tell the difference between a copycat mutilation, performed by pranksters on an animal already dead from natural causes, and the real thing?

He answered with a good working definition:

"First, a copycat has died from natural causes. This rules out the possibility that it was killed by an intentional drug overdose . . . and I can also tell by the skill of the surgery. Every butcher or surgeon leaves behind a 'handprint,' the results of his style of using the knife." Green's eyes narrowed, and an expression close to rapture crossed his features. "I can tell that many of these were done by the same person. I can see exactly how this guy turned his knife, exactly how he went about it." Plainly, Dr. Green wanted to catch this person, and badly.

Green was particularly interested in the combination of skills shown by the cultist cattle mutilators. "They've got a certain level of pharmacological knowledge, they know about drugs like

Ketamine and succinylcholine and how to use them. Then they've also got this level of surgical skill. And whoever it is has learned how to successfully approach range cattle without spooking them. They're very shy, and you have to know how to get close to them without scaring them away. These people know that it's easier to do it in a car than on foot, for instance."

This, of course, explained the presence of vehicle tracks at the sites of all the confirmed mutilated cattle found in Alberta.

Green went on to discuss patterns he had found in the damage to the confirmed mutilations he had diagnosed.

"The organs taken from the animals are not always the same," he explained.

"Often, the head is missing some sense organs; tongue, lips, ear, eye, but in no discernible pattern," Green continued.

"From the area under the tail, it's usually the rectum, the vulva or testicles and penis, and sometimes the pelvic organs, the uterus, bladder, and the terminal colon. It's like taking the core of an apple."

Shades of Howard Burgess, thought Kagan. He asked Green about this.

"Well, that whole mass of tissue weighs about fifteen or twenty pounds," he said. "And we can tell exactly the kind of instrument that's being used. It's a long, thin knife, like a filleting knife for fish. You see, it's easier to slice out the whole large piece of flesh with all these parts than to sit there and dissect out just the vulva and the vaginal canal."

Coring the animal's rear this way was, then, simply a matter of speed and convenience for the cultists, and had nothing to do with anything else.

"The tip of the tail is almost never taken," said Green. "Also, there are never any hide patches taken from confirmed mutilations. The only cases where there are patches of hide taken are in *cases of predator damage*."

Ah, thought Kagan, now this is a real nugget. Now, not only Rommel, but this pathologist was also making the point that *missing hide patches were exactly what was expected in cases of predator and scavenger activity.* Once again, the mutologists and untrained law officers had gotten everything backward. The damage to the bulls that had been confirmed as mutilated by humans bore very visible signs of knife work.

"In those cases," said Green, "the skin was cut and the whole scrotum was taken. Also, the tip of the prepuce, the sheath of hide that covers the penis, was cut open and the penis was pulled *backward* through the scrotum wound and sliced off."

This kind of removal, of course, could not possibly be accomplished by predators.

Kagan asked Lauber about the legal status of cattle mutilations.

"According to this," he turned to a copy of *Criminal Code of Canada,* "it's no offense to cut up an animal that's already dead. But injuring or endangering live cattle is an offense indictable for up to five years in prison."

So cattle mutilations in Canada were serious business.

Kagan showed Dr. Green the photo and lab reports from the pathologist J. J. Andrews at Iowa State University, concerning the recently confirmed mutilated calf in that state.

Both Green and Lauber agreed that although the damage looked similar to confirmed mutilations they had seen in Canada, one could never make a determination from a photograph.

"That requires close, skilled observation," said Green, emphasizing the point Rommel had made again and again throughout his report.

Kagan asked Green exactly how he made his determinations as to whether the wounds on mutilated animals had been caused by a knife or by predators' teeth and beaks.

"I look for microscopic evidence, either of tooth marks or of smooth edges and hairs cut perpendicularly to their length." He grinned. "The same method used by the lab at Colorado State University in 1975."

Green added some depth to the statistics on mutilated animals Lauber had given Kagan earlier.

"In 1979, we had three confirmed cases, death established as a Ketamine overdose, and confirmed knife cuts. There were ten probables; no cause of death, but there was no discernible natural cause, and the knife wounds were confirmed. There were thirteen copycats where we were able to determine a natural cause of death and also confirm knife cuts after death."

Green spoke about the availability of the drugs being used on the animals, Ketamine and succinylcholine.

"I don't really know how controlled they are. You'd usually have to get them from a veterinarian, and vets wouldn't give them to just anyone. But in the veterinary supply business you're dealing with animals and not people, so the big supply companies like Burroughs-Wellcome and Rogar probably aren't as stringent as they might be in selling it. You could probably go to a vet supply house and say I'm Doctor So-and-so, and they'd sell it to you. It would also be easy to steal it from a vet, and, since both drugs are used on humans, someone who worked in a hospital could easily steal it from there.''

Kagan asked Green about the use of nicotine as an animal tranquilizer. Tom Adams had sent us a report from the USDA laboratory in Ames, Iowa, on a reportedly mutilated South Dakota horse that had a significant concentration of nicotine in its liver. We knew that nicotine sulfate once was a common anethestic solution for tranquilizer guns.

''You're talking about something called Black Leaf 40,'' said Green. ''It's not controlled and can be sold over the counter. It's a nicotine sulfate immobilizer that was popular during the 50s and 60s, but it's now in disfavor. It's too toxic and too hard to handle. The dose is critical; you can easily kill an animal by accident.''

Kagan gave the doctor the lab report. After reading it, Green said, ''This could be from a nicotine injection, but nicotine is an alkaloid, and there are thousands of toxic plants with alkaloids in them, so this finding may be an inaccurate reading on any one of a number of natural vegetable substances that could have killed the horse.''

Lauber and Green were both out of time. Before Kagan left, Corporal Lauber insisted he interview a rancher outside of Calgary named Ray Nicholl. Nicholl was the head of the civilian range patrol in the area and could supply more information, not only about local security measures, but about ranchers' attitudes toward the mutilation reports.

RCW

Ray Nicholl was a short, stocky man in his middle thirties, with reddish hair and a tenor voice. Like so many of the people we would meet, Nicholl did not look like the archetype of the leathery rancher, first cousin to John Wayne. He reminded Kagan of a self-assured, successful businessman, perhaps a retailer or an executive from a small corporation. Nicholl's home was a large, modern log house built of what looked like peeled pine trees, a fine mixture of available natural materials and state-of-the-art design.

They sat at the kitchen table. Nicholl's two-year-old son boldly toddled out of another room, climbed into the chair next to Kagan, and proceeded to stare at him with great curiosity throughout the conversation.

Nicholl filled Kagan in on the range patrols. The official name of the program was the Rural Crime Watch, referred to as the RCW. It was the same in spirit as an urban citizens' auxiliary in Calgary called the Neighborhood Watch. The RCW was a purely voluntary venture sponsored by the RCMP, the Western Stockgrower's Association, and the Alberta Cattle Commission, and ninety-five percent of all the ranchers in the area were members. The program had been started because the range area outside Calgary was so large that the RCMP could not patrol it adequately. Apparently, the recent growth spurt in Calgary had brought with it the usual side effect: increased crime. The RCW was a timely response.

The RCW had been formed in September, 1979, in cooperation with the RCMP, during the height of the first Alberta cattle mutilation wave. Nicholl was emphatic about the fact that its inception had nothing to do with the mutilations.

''There had been lots of rural problems on the upswing, rustling, vandalism, robbery,'' he explained. ''The RCMP had only eighteen officers to cover almost 5,000 square miles. The membership of the RCW is about 110 men, so it increases their effectiveness.'' The mutilations had been only one minor issue among many others.

Nicholl explained that the job of the RCW was simply to observe and report to the RCMP; strange or suspicious vehicles, anything out of the ordinary. They were not a vigilante group and would not make arrests. They would call in any suspicious activity to the RCMP and let them handle it.

Kagan asked him about the impact of the cattle mutilation press coverage on the ranchers in 1979 and 1980.

''We haven't had any mutilations in this particular area,'' Nicholl explained. ''But last year, the subject was discussed at all the meetings. At first, the effect was awesome. Everyone wondered why is it happening? It was mystifying.''

Nicholl told how the ranchers' first reactions were fear and confusion.

''Everyone was pondering the whys and hows,'' he explained. The sensationalistic press stories had fed the fear and confusion. But apparently, the RCMP immediately realized what was happening and began freely sharing accurate information with the RCW to avoid panic and mass hysteria, and also to enlist the ranchers' help in catching the cattle mutilators.

"We'd really like to be part of catching the muters; we want to find out who it is," said Nicholl. The RCMP's flow of information had stopped the panic cold, at least in the RCW's areas, because they were part of the RCMP's investigation. They were assured of getting the real information, and so were not tempted by bizarre theories.

This, precisely, was the difference between Alberta and Colorado, and Alberta and New Mexico. In fact, Nicholl claimed he spoke for the rest of the ranchers when he said that he was extremely displeased with the way the press had handled the 1979 cattle mutilation reports. Apparently, the sensationalistic press coverage of the reported mutilations had had a similar effect on Nicholl and the other ranchers.

"When we stopped talking to the press after the RCMP started involving us, everything quieted down," he explained. "We sure could use some *good* press coverage on our activities; it would help intimidate any criminals who might want to come out here."

Nicholl, an experienced hunter and tracker, scoffed at the mutologists' claims that there was something bizarre and mysterious about predators' seeming avoidance of some reportedly mutilated carcasses.

"I've seen that many times with normal animals dead from natural causes," said Nicholl. "It's not unusual for predators and scavengers to avoid dead cattle. For instance, sometimes they won't bother with carcasses during the summer, because there's so much other food around for them—gophers, mice, rabbits—why would a coyote bother with a big cow? If a rancher touches the carcass, or drags it away, there's man scent all over it. That keeps them away too. Or if there's anything made of metal in the area or near the carcass—fences, farm machines, even cars—that iron smell will keep the predators away. They won't go near that."

As far as local cults went, Nicholl was vague. He had known about cult activity around Calgary since before the mutilations began to be reported, but did not know any details.

Kagan asked him about the availability of drugs like succinylcholine and Ketamine.

"They're controlled, they're not available to everybody," he said, but the method of control was not exactly foolproof.

"There's no such thing as a true prescription for these things," he explained. "The control is based on someone's personal acquaintance with the supplier. He will probably sell almost anything to someone he knows, but not to a stranger. It's up to the supplier's discretion."

Nicholl said that it was also easy to get tranquilizer dart guns. "It's simple to buy or rent them," he said. "And the Fish and Wildlife men all have them too. They're stolen all the time."

Kagan next journeyed to *Blackie*, Alberta, to interview Chuck Willoughby, the farmer and ex-Calgary police officer whose mutilated Simmental bull had started the mute flap in Alberta in 1979.

Willoughby's land was right off a gravel road, his front door was no more than sixty yards from it. Behind the house and the barn and a few garage and shed buildings, Willoughby's pasture land stretched away to its bordering fence lines against his neighbor's property. Willoughby, a tall, rangy man near six feet six, led him into the dining room. They were joined by Willoughby's twelve-year-old son, a serious-faced kid who remained silent until he was asked to speak.

Kagan began by asking about the mutilation in August of 1979 of the prize Simmental bull he was pasturing on his property for his friend Don Seney.

Willoughby explained that he was not a rancher but a farmer. He grew wheat and barley, and kept a small herd of about forty cattle on the pasture land a half-mile or so behind his house. The mutilated bull had been in this field with all the cows when he was brought down and cut apart.

Willoughby quickly gave Kagan the background on the case, some of which differed from the newspaper accounts. The papers had placed great emphasis on the fact that the animal was a "prize bull" and had relished quoting its value at $35,000.

"Actually, that's not really accurate," said Willoughby. "At the time Seney bought the animal back in 1976, the Simmental was a rare, exotic breeding animal brought in to improve the quality of the herd. They were scarce and expensive. He paid $35,000 for it back then, but by the time the bull died last year its value was down to about $5,000, because Simmentals are pretty common now, and they're just not so valuable."

This case was the first one confirmed as a mutilation by the RCMP and a local veterinarian who had examined the carcass.

Although Dr. Green was not involved at that time, and no microscopic analysis was done on the bull's wounds to determine absolutely their surgical nature, the damage was apparently so obvious that both the RCMP and the local vet agreed that the damage was surgical. This was not the only reason the RCMP counted the incident as a confirmed mutilation. There was plenty of supporting evidence, particularly the presence, as Lauber had told Kagan, of vehicle tracks in the pasture indicating that the bull had been chased in a circle by a car or truck before it was killed.

The RCMP lab had run chemistries on the bull's tissues and had not been able to find any drugs. In fact, the lab had never satisfactorily established a cause of death, natural or otherwise.

"The cuts looked different from predator damage," said Willoughby. "They were too neat and clean, neat as a pin.

"I reported the animal as cut up," he explained. "I knew it was unusual, but that was all. I had never even heard of cattle mutilations at that time."

Now here was an excellent witness. He had not reported a *cattle mutilation*, with all the attendant mythology; he had seen and reported a bull that someone had killed and cut up. He had seen a dead and mutilated animal, not a manifestation of the *cattle mutilation phenomenon*. Here again was where Canada was different from the U.S., at least until 1979. There was no mutilation *phenomenon* working to predispose the ranchers and farmers to see bizarreness where there was none.

The bull had been seen alive on Saturday night, August 11, 1979, and found dead the next day. It was lying in a dip, a hollow in the pasture, so it was not directly visible from the rear windows of the ranch house half a mile away. According to Willoughby, the veterinarian who did a complete autopsy on the bull the next day, when the RCMP came out to examine the carcass, said the animal had apparently been dead about ten hours when found.

"My son here found the bull," said Willoughby, pointing across the table to the boy. "He went out to the pasture and come running back in and said 'Dad, Prince is dead, and somebody cut his balls off!' "

Perhaps, thought Kagan, there is something to first impressions. He asked the boy what he had seen.

"It didn't look like other dead cows I've seen. It was different," he said.

Willoughby had gone out immediately to check the animal.

"I threw some old clothes over it and came back to the house and cabled the RCMP," he said.

"Why the old clothes?" Kagan asked.

"They have man smell on them. They'll keep the predators away. I didn't want anything chewing on the carcass before the police got here."

The veterinarian, Dr. Ray Wise, had done a complete necropsy on the bull but, according to Willoughby, had been unable to find any evidence of drug injection sites.

"He even rolled the animal over and still couldn't find any needle marks," Willoughby explained.

The RCMP lab had done a complete chemistry scan and failed to locate any tranquilizers in the bull's tissues.

Of course, this did not mean there were no drugs. Drug analysis is a science of specifics: you need to have some idea of what you're looking for in order to know which tests to use.

Willoughby said the veterinarian had told him that the bull had lost its scrotum and testicles and eighteen inches of its penis, which had been pulled back through the scrotum wound and sliced off in a way impossible for predators to accomplish, the tassel of hair at the end of the prepuce sheath was taken, a slice was missing from one side of the tongue, the rectum was cut out in a "very round hole about six inches in diameter, and a small piece of the ear was missing.

"That piece of the ear had been tattooed with a brand identification number," Willoughby explained. "The RCMP had wanted that kept quiet so that whoever had the ear might not throw it away to avoid being linked to the crime."

Kagan asked him how this single, isolated incident had suddenly blown up into a news media cattle mutilation party in Alberta.

"Well, the RCMP released the news to the local radio station, CHRB," said Willoughby. "They didn't think there was anything to it, just a bull that someone killed and cut up. The report was broadcast, and then everything broke loose when a few of the reporters up here put this incident together with all the cattle mutilation business from the U.S. No one up here knew or cared anything about cattle mutilations until then." Within a few weeks, as evidenced by the Canadian news clippings we had seen, there was a "wave" of cattle mutilations in Canada. And this wave actually consisted of about a hundred *unconfirmed reports*, at the core of which were perhaps a dozen probable real mutilations, only *three* of which were absolutely confirmed. What had happened in Canada was live proof of Rommel's point about the influence of the press's handling of the mutilation reports, the influence of the unsupported notions of the mutilation phenomenon on the minds of the ranching community, and Dr. Stewart's point about the significant effect of the local law enforcement agency's (in this case the RCMP's) inability to solve the case immediately. Canada was a perfect laboratory for observing these aspects of the mutilation *phenomenon* and how it gradually distorted the issue of cattle mutilations into one of public panic, media misinformation, and mass psychological effects.

Once the news broke and the connection was made to the U.S. mutilation literature, Willoughby had found himself deluged with visitors.

"The reporters started showing up and kept showing up," he said. "A bunch of UFO people started coming by, too. One guy, a UFO buff from Edmonton, came here and told me that he knew it was aliens that mutilated that bull. He told me they were aliens from the third dimension, sent by the devil."

Willoughby had no use for the flying saucer theories. He spoke about the RCMP's insistence that the few actual mutilations were done by local cults.

"The RCMP is working on this cult theory. They're basically saying that they know who it is, but they just can't catch them in the act."

It turned out that Willoughby did not like the cult theory either. He believed that some of the confirmed mutilations might have been performed by cults, but that the first one, which happened on his land, had been part of a governmental chemical and biological warfare experimentation conspiracy.

"I think the chemical warfare experiment theory makes more sense," he said. "I heard that lots of the American mutilated animals had concentrated infections. I heard about that from a local news reporter who went to New Mexico and brought the information back."

This sounded suspiciously like a third-hand variation on the Dr. Hedelius case from Utah in 1977. Chuck Willoughby might have been influenced by the mutilation *phenomenon* after all.

"I think they take the extremities, you know, the sex organ, ears, to see how far the germs travel in the animal's body.

"I read Ed Sanders's article from *Oui* about the cattle mutilations, too," he said. "One of the TV reporters gave it to me. And the rest of the information I got from one of our reporters who interviewed people down in the States."

Well, it was now plain. Ed Sanders's two articles in *Oui*, though far superior to anything ever produced by the mutologists, had been heavily slanted toward government conspiracy theories, and one of them, along with the rest of the CB warfare theoretics, had been fed to Willoughby by local journalists.

"Besides," said Willoughby, "the surgical work on that bull was too expert, too good for a cult to have done it."

Kagan wanted to see the spot where the bull had been found and get a feel for the distances involved. This was also his first time at the site of an actual cattle mutilation.

They hopped into Willoughby's pickup truck and bounced off across the field.

"There were no vehicle tracks at the scene," said Willoughby. "They found some tracks by the south gate, about 500 yards from the bull, but none in the pasture."

Odd, thought Kagan. That's a direct contradiction of what Lauber said, not once, but twice. Lauber had said they found vehicle tracks all over the pasture, running in a circle that surrounded the dead bull and clearly indicated it had been chased around and around by a car. Kagan doubted that Willoughby was intentionally lying. Here was a dilemma. Who did you believe, the RCMP or Willoughby? Kagan thought a minute.

There *had* to be tracks in the pasture, no matter what Willoughby said. Willoughby had already demonstrated that his perceptions were highly influenced by cattle mutilation theories and literature brought to him by media people, and this meant that his observations were all subject to distortion. So Kagan decided that the RCMP's discovery of the vehicle tracks in the pasture was far more reliable than the farmer's denial of their existence.

"I think they came in a helicopter," said Willoughby. "We see helicopters around here all the time. This is right on their flight path. They always check the power lines." Sure enough, the far border of Willoughby's land was edged by high-tension stanchions. So helicopter activity around his farm was strictly run-of-the-mill, and there was absolutely no reason to connect any chopper activity in the area with cattle mutilations.

The truck jerked to a stop. "I heard a chopper go over the day before the bull died," he said. "And another one came over later that day. I also saw a strange truck passing up and down the road in front of my place the day before the bull went down," he said. "It was a half-ton pickup, and it cruised up and down very slowly like it was looking for something. There were two young guys in it."

This truck interested Kagan. A short leap of imagination could turn those two young men into young cult practitioners like Jay from *Jay's Journal*, cruising around looking for animals to mutilate. The rolling land in front of Willoughby's property, and the empty gravel roads, made any car or truck stand out like a sore thumb. There were not many people living in the area, and all local vehicles were familiar; a strange truck with unfamiliar people would be very noticeable, and would be remembered by anyone who saw it.

Willoughby pointed down to a large bare patch on the ground. Part of it was covered with a lumpy, vegetative material that looked like a cross between cow flop and dried grass.

"There's where the carcass was. You can still see the bull's stomach contents on the ground there, where the vet dumped them when he cut the carcass up."

The bare spot interested Kagan. He had run across many references in the mutologists' writings to the weird way that no grass would grow on the spot where a mutilated cow had lain. This had been touted as another proof of weirdness, possibly due to radiation, bacterial warfare contamination, or the presence of outer space people. Kagan asked Willoughby about this.

"Oh, that's nothing. Happens all the time. The grass always dies like that under a dead cow. It'll stay like that for a season or two and then grow back. It's the usual thing."

Willoughby pointed out the nearest gate into the pasture. It was about 400 yards away. An ungraveled grass access road ran past it, leading off the gravel road in front of the house. Willoughby explained that he never used this gate to enter the field, so he and the RCMP had assumed that the vehicle tracks they found there after the bull died had been left by whoever killed the animal.

"When I looked at the carcass, there were no signs of struggle or kicking the ground; the grass under it was intact. It bothered me. It looked like it just crashed over," he said.

Kagan turned and looked at the grass behind the truck, over which they had just driven. The truck's indented tire tracks were clearly visible in it. There would be no way to miss the signs of a vehicle entering this pasture. Then he noticed what resembled tire tracks, except that they were merely tire-width yellow trails in the grass, as if the grass in those strips had yellowed and died.

"What are those?" he asked.

"Those are tire tracks, too," said Willoughby. "Old ones. After the truck flattens down the grass when it first makes its tracks, the grass springs back up, but the weight of the truck kills the grass, so there are these trails of yellowed grass wherever the truck had been. If it doesn't rain too much, they can last a whole season, right into the winter."

Bingo! This meant that not only fresh tracks would be visible in the grass but also tracks one, two, three days old, and even those several weeks or months old. And *this* meant that any vehicle that had entered the pasture to chase after the bull would have had to leave long-standing traces of its presence. This, in turn, meant that the RCMP had many ways to ascertain whether anyone had herded that bull in circle with a vehicle, so their finding of tracks was not a touchy point. It was something quite easy to observe.

Since the bull had been found in a dip, invisible from the house, the mutilators could easily have run without lights to chase the bull and then shielded their flashlights from the view of the house while they cut it up. They could have entered the gate near the bull by driving down the gravel main road and onto the grass road that passed by the pasture gate. One did not need to involve helicopters or space ships to explain the ease with which whoever killed and mutilated the bull could have accomplished the act.

As they drove back to the house, Willoughby continued talking.

"This thing scared the hell out of my wife. We lock the house day and night now. We never did before. Did you know that there were some cases where the farmers and ranchers had cut up their own cows, mutilated them? The government said it would reimburse people for confirmed mutilations, so some guys tried to get in on the action."

After a moment, Willoughby added something else. "You know, someone could also have done in that bull as a revenge against Don Seney, the owner. He had sold his farm to a group of Hutterites, and a lot of people didn't like that. They didn't want those people living in the area." Hutterites are a Christian sect that practices a very orthodox and primitive form of worship.

They live in communal houses, and have more in common with groups like the Shakers than with the mainstream Christians, who often find them difficult to understand.

Yes, there were many reasons, all of them earthly, why that bull might have been killed and mutilated, and there was no need, and no evidence to support anything beyond the work of quite human cultists or someone else in this case.

"The area is quieted down now, though," said Willoughby. "All the ranchers and farmers have pretty well settled down about this thing."

Kagan thanked him for his time and took his leave. He had a plane to catch in a few hours which would take him to Great Falls, Montana, to meet with Captain Keith Wolverton of the Cascade County Sheriff's Department. Wolverton had been at the center of a large Montana mute wave in 1975, which had also been studded with UFO sightings, Bigfoot sightings, and a wildly vicious political war between the press, the sheriff's office, and the USDA laboratory at Bozeman, Montana.

3

Montana

Mystery Stalks The Prairie

On the plane down from Calgary to Great Falls, Kagan reviewed the notes of two phone conversations: one with Captain Keith Wolverton of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office, and another with the Montana toxicologist named Herb Anderson.

Wolverton had co-authored a book about the large mute wave in Cascade and several surrounding counties in Montana during 1975 and 1976. The book had the provocative title of *Mystery Stalks the Prairie*. Wolverton's name was second in the credits, after that of a woman named Roberta Donovan. She had been described in several articles by mutologists as a journalist, but we had not run across her name on any of the mutilation literature either before or since this book.

A paperback, *Mystery* looked like something produced in very limited quantity by a small publishing operation, perhaps an offshoot of some other venture. In fact, it had been published by something called the THAR Institute, in Raynesford, Montana, a small town about thirty miles east of Great Falls. This THAR Institute had popped up a few times before during our investigation. At the end of Harry Lebelson's seminal *Omni* article there had been a note asking that anyone with information about cattle mutilations contact this THAR Institute. Early in our research we had sent THAR a letter requesting some information. THAR had never responded.

This had seemed strange until two nights ago, when Kagan had telephoned Herb Anderson from Calgary to confirm a meeting with him in Great Falls a few days later.

Anderson was a toxicologist, an expert on pharmacological and natural poisons, and an expert on the treatment of accidental poisonings. It was clear that he had an interest in the mutilations and had been involved in some way with Wolverton's investigation during the wave of 1975 and 1976, but beyond that his role was obscure.

Anderson had told Kagan that the mysterious THAR Institute was his own organization. When asked what the letters stood for, he said only that it was a private group and that the acronym was irrelevant since its original meaning had since changed.

Anderson is the kind of person who gives the impression that he is always hiding something, and he often countered direct questions with retorts like "Why do you want to know that?"

During the halting phone call, Anderson had told Kagan that he was a pharmacist as well as a toxicologist, and that his specialty was in the field of educating people about poisons, setting up poison prevention programs, publishing literature on the subject, and acting as a consultant on toxicology to physicians and hospitals across the country. He had recently set up a computer-directed information retrieval system for poisoning diagnosis and treatment. In addition, Anderson was one of the editors of the *Journal of Clinical Toxicology,* a professional trade publication for the field equivalent to the *Journal of the A.M.A.*

Apparently, THAR Institute was a sideline for Anderson, not part of his toxicology practice. THAR, he explained, was a kind of free-floating research organization through which he had been peripherally involved in helping Wolverton during his investigation.

"THAR ended up in that article because it's starting to become well known as a kind of clearinghouse for unusual phenomena," Anderson explained.

Uh-oh, thought Kagan, here we go again. Project Stigma all over again, pseudo-science rides again.

Luckily, Kagan was wrong.

"THAR tries to be open to most areas of unusual phenomena," said Anderson. "There are too many so-called researchers around who really don't know what they're doing, who have no scientific knowledge. And most of the established labs won't pay attention to anything that looks the least bit odd." Because of his national network of contacts through his toxicology work, Anderson was able to enlist the informal help of competent experts in various fields of medical and scientific research whenever THAR ran across an interesting, unsolved dilemma. THAR was a sort of hobby for Anderson, who liked to locate apparent mysteries to crack.

"THAR will take on anything unusual. We've proved in several cases that things believed to be unusual or bizarre were perfectly normal in their cause."

Kagan breathed a sigh of relief.

THAR had, for example, cleared up several mysterious cattle deaths (unrelated to mutilations) by discovering that the animals had been killed by a rare red algae infection.

"We have a very limited interest in UFOs," said Anderson. "We've offered to do things like test samples that people claim are from flying saucers, to see if they're real or not." Anderson remarked that most of the time, people who had seemed desperate to send their UFO samples somehow never got around to it. The man had a very subtle sense of humor.

THAR had a small publishing business, which accounted for Wolverton's book. Anderson explained that he had published other titles on subjects like computer technology, futurology, and NASA-oriented material about the space program.

He agreed to meet Kagan in Great Falls.

Kagan turned to the notes of his phone conversation with Wolverton a few weeks ago.

Wolverton had immediately informed him that because of a court injunction he could not allow him to see or copy any records, reports, or official papers connected to the cattle mutilations in 1975 and 1976. The Cascade County Sheriff's Office was being sued by a local agricultural publication called the *Montana Farmer-Stockman*. Apparently, the *Stockman* wanted Wolverton to release all these papers to them under the banner of the press's right of complete and free access to police files. The suit had come about because Wolverton, in the accepted manner of almost all police officers dealing with the press, had offered the *Stockman* the same information he had freely given to all the other local newspapers. This included official reports on the various reported mutilations, but excluded the names of the owners and the exact locations of some of the incidents. Wolverton had followed standard police practice, protecting the identities of innocent parties involved in an official investigation.

In this case, the *Stockman*'s reporter had not accepted Wolverton's refusal to release the names of the owners of reportedly mutilated animals. No names were ever mentioned, not even those of the veterinarians who had examined some of the carcasses. The *Stockman*'s reporter had increased his demands, and Wolverton had again offered him the same information given to all other newsmen: almost everything but the names of the owners of the mutilated animals.

Frustrated, the *Stockman* reporter had gotten his paper to initiate a suit to force the sheriff's department to release the information. As a result, the material in question, all Wolverton's files, could not be shown to anyone until the suit was settled.

The greedy reporter from the *Montana Farmer-Stockman* was, Wolverton said, named Leland Cade. A flashbulb went off in Kagan's head. Of course: Cade had been quoted by Ken Rommel in his report, dismissing the Montana cattle mutilations as hokum, panic, and mistaken predator damage. The tone of Cade's language had been hard, angry. It was clear he was steaming about cattle mutilations, and probably at the sheriff's department as well.

Wolverton explained that a few years ago Cade had written a few scathing articles about him and the sheriff's department, denouncing them as incompetent and claiming the whole cattle mutilation issue was a fraud. The mutilations had disappeared as an issue for Cascade County, Keith Wolverton, and Montana by early 1977, but Cade was continuing to beat his drum and call for the heads of Wolverton and the sheriff three years later.

Wolverton had explained that Cade's position back in 1977 was strengthened by the fact that the State Agricultural Laboratory at Bozeman, Montana, had publicly come out against the existence of cattle mutilations as well. They had seen a couple of reportedly mutilated cattle and said that it was predator damage.

"They took a stand against us," said Wolverton. "All we wanted was some help from them, and they just wouldn't come across. They showed a great deal of animosity toward us."

As Wolverton spoke, he gave the impression that his involvement with the mutilations had somehow wounded him. He sounded fed up, disappointed, betrayed.

"Look, there are a hundred ideas about this, but no proof for any of them," Wolverton had said. "At this point, I don't know what to think about all of it. All through this thing I took the same position I would have with any criminal case: treat everything as if you're going to have to take it into court. You've got to be able to prove what you say. Any other kinds of claims are irresponsible."

Wolverton explained that at no time had he or any other lawmen made the determination that any given animal had been mutilated.

"We always sent the samples to a veterinarian or a pathologist, in this case a human medical pathologist, not a veterinary pathologist. These guys kept coming back to us and saying the animals had been cut with sharp instruments, so we believed them exactly like we would have in any other criminal case. You always let the expert draw the conclusion."

In Montana, the situation had held one complication: the cuts on many of the animals claimed to have been mutilated were not straight or smooth. They were *serrated,* evenly and cleanly, like cuts from a pinking shears. And, according to Wolverton's book and his rendition of his experts' opinions, the edges of some of these serrated cuts also looked as though they had been burned, possibly by some type of chemical.

"The problem just went away," he had explained. "The mutilation reports ended at the beginning of 1977. Just like that."

Wolverton had explained that he had personally examined about fifty reportedly mutilated cattle.

"Most of them were mistaken predator damage," he said. "But about twenty-five had those serrated-looking cuts. Two pathologists said they were cut by an instrument. The business about the burns was never conclusively proven one way or another."

Mutologists always talked about the "hundreds" of cattle mutilations that had occurred in Montana. And yet here was the man who had been at the center of it all, easily remarking that *of course most of the mutilations reported had turned out to be not mutilations at all, but mistaken predator damage*. It made sense to him that most of the reports were wrong, that in most cases the ranchers had been so influenced by the press coverage of the mutilations that they had started seeing surgery that wasn't there.

"If I had it to do all over again," Wolverton had said, "I wouldn't release any information at all. There were too many rumors. It got too complicated, and the case was ruined."

The Montana cases had also been complicated by other events. There had been several dramatic UFO sightings over underground Minuteman missile silos in the area at the same time the mutilations had taken place. The Air Force authorities at Malmstrom Air Force Base, near Great Falls, had confirmed that these UFOs had appeared on radar. And, once the mutilation panic was in full swing in the region, people suddenly started sighting hairy creatures, Bigfoot, and other strange sights, including something that was described as looking like a several-story-tall hotel floating above the ground.

"When I was involved with it more, I lived it night and day," said Wolverton, a weary note in his voice. "Now, a few years later, I just don't know what I think about it, I just don't know. But I was convinced at the time, and I'm still convinced, that there was more than predators involved with some of those cattle. Two pathologists said those animals were cut."

Kagan reached under the airplane seat and rummaged round in his bags. He pulled out *Mystery Stalks the Prairie* and began to thumb it, reading the notes he had made a week before. There were some problems with the book. First of all, who was Roberta Donovan? He was concerned about the book's orientation, its tone, and the voice of the writer or writers.

The book described hundreds of individual events that took place from the beginning of the Montana mutilation wave in the fall of 1975 until its end about eighteen months later. There were stories about mutilated animals found with the strange serrated cuts, burned edges on cuts, and instances where animals had allegedly been found drained of blood. There were reports of needle marks found on mutilated animals, one instance where someone reported that an animal's eye had been removed through a small hole in the skull bone above the eye socket, reports of wounds found on animals' legs that reportedly led through their tissues directly to their heart. There was one case in which a mutilated animal had reportedly been found in a freshly plowed field with no tracks around it, and another in which a reportedly mutilated calf was found on top of a 600-foot-high butte with no tracks or footprints near it.

The book explained how Wolverton in particular had become involved in the investigation, with the full support of the Cascade County Sheriff. Early on during the 1975 reports, Wolverton's frustration at not being able to solve the cases had led him to make a public appeal through the media for help from the local citizens in solving the case.

This act, although done in good faith, had probably been the single most influential element in raising the number of reported cattle mutilations and causing UFO and helicopter sightings to multiply at their dizzying rate.

The book also noted that a "Montana toxicologist" had made innumerable tests on specimens taken from mutilated animals. This was obviously Herb Anderson.

Throughout the book, references were made to veterinarians who had examined these animals and declared that they were drained of blood, or that they had definitely been cut, or that they had found puncture wounds (injection sites) in the animals' throats. One veterinarian had advanced the theory that someone was draining the blood from the animals by pumping a saline solution through their circulatory systems to push out the blood. The Teton County Sheriff's Office had experimentally dosed a sick calf with Ketamine to see if the drug could be used to immobilize the animal and increase its blood pressure and heart rate to aid in bleeding it dry while alive. Mention was made of how a "man in Texas," obviously Tom Adams, had contacted Keith Wolverton and begun supplying him with cattle mutilation arcana, theories, and news clippings in return for information on the Montana incidents.

In several instances, according to the book, mutilated animals had been found covered by a filmy substance that, it was claimed, a laboratory had identified as a petroleum distillate.

The book was extremely confusing and difficult to follow, because the writers had taken care, obviously under Wolverton's fierce determination to guard the privacy of innocent ranchers and cattle owners, not to mention a single name of anyone referred to in the book. It was therefore impossible to cross-check the assertions made with the people they were attributed to, or to test the accuracy or believability of the book's contents.

It was impossible, as well, to locate and examine the credentials of the vets and labs referred to.

The book also covered the discovery in August of 1976 of a cult ritual site found near Butte, Montana, about 125 miles southwest of Great Falls. Located on the side of a wooded mountain, the site consisted of a large ring of stones, many of them marked with the names of pagan gods and goddesses, with a fire pit in the center. But no connection was ever established between the cult site, other possible cult groups, and cattle mutilations.

Mystery told of how, beginning in the late summer of 1975, the area around Cascade and Teton Counties was inundated with reports of mysterious helicopters and UFOs, strange nocturnal lights that hovered, flew through the night, and moved silently through pastures like automobiles, although the witnesses knew there were no roads where the lights were traveling.

According to the book, in December of 1975 there had been several instances of deputies from several counties who had spent whole nights chasing lights in the skies from county to county. In some cases, dozens of cars and officers were involved in these chases over several hundred square miles. In a few of the cases, the Air Force authorities at Malmstrom Air Force Base, who had willingly offered to help Wolverton and his men try to deal with the UFO and helicopter sightings, had logged these on radar, and even sent security helicopters out after reported low-flying UFOs. Many of these UFO sightings had been made by deputies, including Wolverton and others from the Cascade County Sheriff's Office. As time went on, the reports increased. People started reporting UFOs during the day, and soon there were reports of hairy Bigfoot-type creatures as well.

Actually, almost two thirds of the book is devoted not to cattle mutilations but to accounts of the UFO sightings and chases in the area, and many of the observations about cattle mutilations are pitched toward a UFO interpretation of the events. In its description of one of the cases in which a mutilated cow was reportedly found inside a locked pasture, the observation was made that anyone wanting to reach the animal would have had to climb the fence and then walk across a half mile of open ground, supposedly leaving tracks. Since no tracks had been found at the scene, the book speculated that this could only mean that "A helicopter or some other air or *space vehicle* was used . . ."

This was surely not unbiased reporting, and there were many more comments in the text that pitched the whole document squarely in the direction of UFOs.

In that Wolverton's name was on the book along with Roberta Donovan's, the implication was that Wolverton had penned some of these highly implicatory sections, and that, therefore, he was predisposed to accept the UFO interpretation of the cattle mutilations. Yet that had not sounded like his belief when Kagan had spoken with him on the phone.

One thing was certain, however. Not one piece of useful hard data would come from this stop in Montana, because Wolverton could not release any official reports. So Kagan was now looking more for political information and a glimpse of how the mutilation wave's effects had lingered in the area after five years had passed.

Great Falls

There was something depressing about Great Falls. Perhaps it was the aura of military presence that hung around the place. This part of Montana was Strategic Air Command territory, Air National Guard country, and missile silo heaven.

Wolverton came out to meet Kagan at the sheriff's office's reception desk and ushered him inside.

Wolverton was dressed in a sport coat and had thick, longish hair and an immaculate full beard. He was in his late thirties, and was soft-spoken and articulate. He carried himself with a noticeably self-possessed air, and the phrase that came to mind to describe him was "good breeding."

There was certainly a note of frustration and disappointment in Wolverton's voice whenever he spoke about the famous cattle mutilations and UFO siege of Cascade County. The experience had apparently shaken Wolverton, possibly even damaged him and made him feel betrayed, embittered. He'd gone into it with an open mind, given it his best shot, and encountered unexpected resistance from people who were supposed to be his allies, like the veterinary lab at Bozeman, and some members of the local press, especially Leland Cade at the *Montana Farmer-Stockman*.

Wolverton filled in some details about the *Stockman*'s suit for his files. He explained that all through 1975 and 1976, when the mute reports were at their height, the *Stockman* had shown no interest in covering them, while all the rest of the area newspapers had covered them regularly.

"We went to the press to get their help in informing the public about this thing," said Wolverton. "The *Farmer-Stockman* was the only publication that refused to help us."

Finally, almost eighteen months after the reports had begun, a conference on the cattle mutilations was held in January of 1977. Dr. Beckwith Hubbell, the head of the State Livestock Diagnostic Laboratory at Bozeman, had met with Wolverton and the sheriffs and deputies from other counties who had been trying to crack the cattle mutilation mystery for almost two years.

Press coverage of the meeting had revealed that the primary point of contention was not so much that Hubbell and the Bozeman lab officially disagreed with the sheriffs' findings and beliefs as that the county sheriffs had wanted Bozeman's help with the mutilation problem for almost two years, and Hubbell had steadfastly refused to take it seriously, ignoring the sheriffs' requests for field pathologists to aid them in investigations and necropsies for suspected mutilated animals. The mutilations had become a touchy issue in local politics.

At the meeting, Wolverton had presented his version of all the reported mutilations and other events that had taken place, along with an extensive collection of slides and photographs of reportedly mutilated animals.

Several people had pointed out, with good reason, that the slides were not any kind of proof, that photographs were insufficient evidence from which to make a determination.

Apparently, Wolverton was unwilling or unable to offer anything more substantial to support the confirmation of mutilations, not even any written reports from the two pathologists and several veterinarians who he continually maintained had told him that the serrated-looking cuts on some of the animals had been made with a sharp instrument.

Press coverage of the earlier stages in the mutilation incidents in Montana revealed that Wolverton had realized early in the game that animals dead longer than twenty-four hours were virtually worthless as provable cases of cattle mutilation. He had informed all his deputies that if any reported mutilated animal was more than twenty-four hours old, they were not to waste more than a cursory visit on it.

It was as a result of this 1977 meeting that Leland Cade had written his scathing article excoriating Wolverton's claims. Cade's article spent most of its time pointing out again and again that neither Wolverton nor any of the other sheriffs' men could provide any kind of conclusive proof from a reliable expert that the animals had been cut. Cade pointed out that in none of the cases where the absence of tracks near carcasses was described as "strange" had any lawmen provided data about the condition of the ground and the weather, which might indicate that it was not at all unusual for there to be no tracks.

Cade had then interviewed ten veterinarians from the area who had, at various times, examined reportedly mutilated cattle at the request of county sheriffs' departments. According to Cade's article, to a man they all denied ever having seen animals that they would swear had been mutilated. Some of the vets maintained that possibly one or two animals might have been mutilated, but then, none of them had applied any sort of sophisticated diagnostic technique to make sure that the cuts had been caused by knives and not by predators' teeth. None of the vets interviewed were veterinary pathologists.

In short, judging from Cade's reporting and from the lack of substantiated evidence presented in Wolverton and Donovan's book, there seemed to be no proof at all that any animals had actually been mutilated in Montana.

Understandably, Wolverton was quite unhappy to be interviewed about the matter. After all, some of these veterinarians might have given the sheriffs' men the impression at the time of their involvement that they believed the animals had been mutilated, but clammed up and became edgy about their local reputations when Leland Cade approached them and demanded incontrovertible proof.

Kagan, however, could not disavow Wolverton simply on the basis of Cade's reporting, even though Cade had made some excellent points. Cade, like Rommel, had tried to reach beyond the limits of his accomplishment. His suit against the Cascade County Sheriff's Department was extreme and smacked of a personal vendetta against Wolverton. He had also written to several law enforcement officers across the country virtually threatening them not to take cattle mutilations seriously. Cade had sent such a letter to Agent Joe Motsinger of the Iowa DCI, the one man who actually *had* a fully documented pathologist's report confirming a recent cattle mutilation. Motsinger had told us about the letter, laughing at its empty arrogance. Like all debunkers, and like all mutologists, Cade had taken a good thing and pushed it to the limits of irrationality and obsession.

Still, he had pointed out that there was little in the way of analyzable evidence in the Montana incidents. No pathology reports, no detailed and verifiable expert conclusions, no conclusive lab work. Montana's cattle mutilations could never be figured into the mute equations as verifiable. Not one of them had been proved in a reliable way. This did not mean that none of them *were* actual, only that no one could logically assume that any of them were actual, confirmed, and real.

"At the height of this thing, for a long time, I treated all these cases very seriously," said Wolverton. "We always sent a vet along with the investigating officer. Toward the end, when the reports started to slow down, I started sending out only a deputy. And I missed the boat on something very important."

It turned out that in July of 1978, long after the mutilation wave had died down, there was a mutilation reported by a rancher about twenty-five miles outside of Great Falls. The deputy went out to look at it and, since the animal had been dead longer than twenty-four hours, he left after a few minutes in accordance with Wolverton's directive. The rancher called the local press and TV station. The newsmen came out, one of them rolled the carcass over, and under it found a large hypodermic needle, along with an empty cellophane envelope which had apparently contained some kind of powdered drug.

Wolverton had sent the needle and the envelope to a lab in Salt Lake City, but all test results had come back negative for drug residue in both the syringe and the cellophane envelope.

Once again, there was nothing to go on.

Wolverton returned to his fierce desire to protect the privacy of the ranchers who reported mutilations in 1975.

"Look," he said, "at the time of this thing, there was a full-scale investigation going on. We were into everything. There were informants who even accused some prominent people in Great Falls of being involved in cult mutilations of cattle." He laughed. "Even the attorney who's defending us in the lawsuit against the *Stockman* had been fingered by someone. I could never let Cade have that information. None of it is confirmed, and a lot of people's reputations could be ruined for no reason."

They discussed Herb Anderson, who still mystified Kagan with his evasive behavior and obtuse responses.

"I've known Herb for twenty years," said Wolverton. "We went to high school together. He's always been that way, secretive and a little odd. I like him a lot, and I trust him completely."

Wolverton confirmed that Anderson had done some lab analyses for him on tissues from mutilated animals. Anderson had never submitted any written reports either, since all his tests had come up negative.

THAR, he explained, published all kinds of material, including a *Weekly Reader*-type newspaper supplement for school children.

"Anderson is terrific at research," he explained. "He has a wheat ranch at Raynesford. The first thing he did when he started the ranch was install a computer system to handle all the ranch work, feed ratios of animals and everything else. He used to give me meat to sample, and then ask me to fill out computer questionnaires about its quality. Herb gets invited by NASA to attend spacecraft launchings. He's very well connected with scientists nationwide."

It turned out that Roberta Donovan had worked for Anderson in his publishing business, and that was how she ended up writing *Mystery Stalks the Prairie*.

Wolverton explained that he had not actually written *any* of the book. He had received credit as an author because he had supplied all the material.

"Almost every word in there is right from official police reports," he explained. "Donovan would take the reports, go home and write, and then bring the work to me. I would edit out what I thought were sensationalistic passages and remove any names or leads that might reveal the identities of ranchers or anyone else involved. I wanted no sensationalism in it at all."

In effect then, Wolverton, who was not an editor, had edited the book.

"I never even read the book in its final form," he explained.

"Are you aware," Kagan asked him, "that the book reads as a pro-UFO document, as if the authors had intentionally slanted it in favor of bizarre explanations and flying saucers?"

Wolverton almost blanched. "No, I didn't realize that. I'm unhappy to hear that," he said.

Well, at least it was now clear why the book read as it did. Roberta Donovan had been enthralled with the notion of UFOs as the cause for the Montana cattle mutilations, and it had shown in the book. Wolverton certainly wasn't responsible for it. And no competent editor had controlled the book's clear bias toward flying saucers.

"If I had it to do all over again, I would never have done the book," said Wolverton. He explained that the original intent of

the book had been as a public service, to inform people about the strange events in Montana, and possibly to motivate anyone reading it to supply information that might aid the lawmen in solving the case. Obviously, it had backfired.

"Yes, there were UFO sightings around here at that time, but I *never* said they were connected to the cattle mutilations," he said. "All I know is that those serrated cuts on the dead animals were confirmed for me as the work of a sharp instrument by a medical pathologist. I didn't make that determination, he did. I listen to experts, I'm not the one to make those judgments. Twenty-three to twenty-five of the cases had serrated cuts," he said. "Five of the vets working with us confirmed that they were the result of a sharp instrument."

Veterinarians, said Wolverton, had told him in one case that an animal looked to have been dropped from the air because, supposedly, its internal organs had been jarred loose from internal suspensory tissue, and in another had said that half the blood had been taken from an animal. All along, Wolverton maintained that he had just followed the conclusions of these men, to whom he deferred as more knowledgeable than himself.

Kagan asked him for some background on exactly how the whole thing had started. Wolverton told him that although the large explosion of reports had begun in the summer and fall of 1975, there had actually been cattle mutilations reported beginning in the summer of 1974.

"In August of 1974, one of the sheriff's deputies, he's retired now, Eddie Hakala, came by. He has a ranch. He mentioned that when he went to work one day he found one of his cows dead and cut up and that he'd never seen anything like it."

Hakala had investigated the case and gotten nowhere. No one got very excited. Through May of 1975, about six or seven mutes had been reported.

"The papers were covering them, and the ranchers were very interested in it," he explained.

Wolverton became concerned, however, when they began talking about forming armed vigilante patrols, and in May of 1975 he called a large press conference to appeal to the public for help and information in solving the cases.

Two months later, the cow flop hit the fan, and the wave of mutilation reports began coming in.

Here it was again. Everything limped along, a few reports here and there, no confirmation, until the two crucial ingredients to the mutilation *phenomenon* were added: the press became actively involved in covering cattle mutilations, and a trusted authority figure went to the people, admitting the police's failure to deal with the case. Snap! Loss of confidence, press sensationalism, mass hysteria, fear, distorted perceptions, and then a mutilation wave. It was the same as Colorado and New Mexico. And the opposite of Canada.

The reports had come steadily from July of 1975 through December of 1976.

"Most of the reports were nothing," Wolverton explained. "They were too old to analyze, they were very decomposed, and the rest were obviously predator damage."

Once again, here was a hero of mutologists, freely asserting that *of course* the large numbers of reported mutilations were not the true number of even possible mutilations. *Of course* the ranchers made mistakes *all the time* and reported badly decomposed animals and obvious cases of predator damage as surgical mutilations.

The animals with the apparently serrated cuts had begun appearing in the *second* year of the reports, 1976. Perhaps some copycats and hoaxers were running around foxing the cops by scissoring parts off naturally dead cows with a pinking shears. After all, they would have learned the technique by reading the 1975 newspaper coverage.

They spoke about the cult site found at Butte, Montana. The site itself appeared to be deserted, and had yielded no clues. But Wolverton had heard about reports from different parts of the state of robed people filing through the woods and dancing around fires late at night.

"We picked up a lot of rumors about cult activity. But none of it went anywhere. Besides, if the mutilations were caused by a cult, the group would be secretive and difficult to ferret out," he observed.

"I just don't know any more about all this," he said. "I've lain awake many nights. You can't conclusively prove anything, but it seems you can't rule anything out either."

A heavyset man with a goatee poked his head into the office. He and Wolverton glanced at each other, and the man quickly withdrew. He poked his head in again and quickly looked at Kagan, and once more drew back out of sight.

Guessing from his behavior, Kagan asked, "Is that Herb Anderson?"

Wolverton smiled. "Yes. Why don't you come in, Herb?" he called.

Anderson came into the room and sat down. He looked to be about forty and had graying dark hair, glasses, and a gray-shot little chin beard. Anderson's eyes had a hooded, flat expression, and with his dark complexion and distant demeanor he could have passed for an Indian or Pakistani. He had had an appointment to meet Kagan at his hotel later that day, and Kagan had the idea that this surprise visit was no accident. Probably, he had shown up at Wolverton's office because he knew Kagan would be there and wanted to check him out before their meeting.

They introduced themselves and shook hands. Wolverton had to leave, so they all went out together, and Anderson promised to meet Kagan at the Best Western in about an hour.

Kagan sat in the hotel lobby, facing the big glass front door, waiting for Anderson. Suddenly, a shape appeared at the corner of his vision. He turned. It was Herb Anderson, who had appeared seemingly out of nowhere.

"Where did you come from?" Kagan asked.

"Oh," said Anderson, "I know lots of entrances to this place."

Kagan liked this guy. He was a character. They went up to Kagan's room and started to talk.

Anderson spoke of his attempts to plot a scientific approach to the cattle mutilation dilemma. He felt that the answer to the mystery might be found by a more selective, detailed approach to minute aspects of the mystery.

"I think we may have been overlooking some small clues," he said.

He felt that everyone had gone wrong trying to figure out the larger picture of the mutilations, patterns of activity, and that the answer lay in detailed analysis.

Naturally, being a toxicologist, Anderson was studying drugs which might have been used to bring the animals down. Unfortunately, Kagan could not tell him about Dr. Green's findings in Canada, since he had promised Lauber to keep the visit a secret. He had asked Green about Anderson, though: Green had known who he was and spoken highly of his reputation as a researcher.

Anderson was particularly interested in succinylcholine. The difficulty of detecting it, along with its quick action, he said, made it *the* ideal drug for cattle mutilators to use.

"How easy is it to get it?" asked Kagan.

"It's controlled, it's a legend drug. Tight control," said Anderson. "But it's widely used in human and vet medicine, so it can be had if you want it badly enough."

They talked about other ways to kill an animal without leaving a trace. Anderson had lots of good ideas, since this was part of his field of expertise. He had a brilliant notion of how to drain the blood from an animal quickly and totally.

"You could put it in a collapsible hyperbaric vacuum chamber," he said. "Knock down the atmospheric pressure inside, and the blood would flow out fast, due to the pressure difference. There are chambers like this in existence," he said.

Somehow, the idea of a small band of cultists dragging around a U-Haul trailer with a hyperbaric chamber in it didn't seem particularly realistic.

Anderson said he had preserved tissue samples from the Montana animals for further study.

"I want to do more selective testing," he said. "I don't want to go over what's been done before. I want to look for biological clues. For instance, are there differences *between* the serrated cuts on different animals? I want to try to duplicate the damage. Can we duplicate the condition of the samples?"

Anderson had already tried to test every prevailing theory for the cause of the cattle mutilations. He had tested for any chemical or biological warfare agents in the tissues.

"I did bacterial cultures on them. Found nothing."

There was a knock at the door. It was Wolverton, come to finish the conversation.

Anderson began to speak about predator damage versus surgical mutilation of cattle. "People seem to be so sure of all aspects of predator damage. They quote freely and authoritatively about it when it comes to these animals. But I wonder why they never quote any research journal, studies, or articles to back up their assertions. Where's the research on predator damage that lends authority to the claims? Where's the literature detailing exactly how predators' teeth can make surgical-appearing wounds?"

A good question, but perhaps a bit overzealous. After all, one did not have to prove so much that predators could make apparently surgical wounds, one had only to prove that in specific cases, the wounds on a given carcass had *not* been made by a sharp instrument. Or conclusively that they *had* been made by such an instrument.

Anderson's ruminations were of a professional cast, and his ideas were interesting, but the fact remained that he himself had run toxicological and bacterial tests on carcasses reported as mutilated, and even said to be mutilated by local veterinarians, and had come up with nothing. So far, that was what was real. Nothing, no proof, no confirmation of anything.

Wolverton returned to the subject of cults.

"I can see how cults could proliferate without any central organization," he said. "Suppose a kid is involved in some kind of cult that mutilated cattle here in Montana. He joins the military and is transferred to, say, Georgia. He initiates some buddies there into the practices. Bang. Cattle mutilations in Georgia."

Excellent point, and another strike against the belief that any cult involvement had to be due to a large, centrally directed group.

Kagan asked Wolverton about Senator Schmitt's 1979 Albuquerque conference.

"I was disappointed in it. I thought there would be only law enforcement people there to discuss the problem, a serious meeting. When I got there, I noticed that ninety-five percent of the people were media people. I refused to speak."

From the Schmitt conference, Wolverton moved to the disastrous conference he had hosted in 1977, where Dr. Hubbell and the crew from the Bozeman lab had challenged him and ridiculed his investigation.

"Look," said Wolverton, exasperated again, "they contradicted themselves. They said it was all predators, but the only way they were able to duplicate those serrated cuts was with a pinking shears."

"I think they squashed the whole thing for political reasons," said Anderson. "The people there had nice government jobs, they didn't want to rock the boat by coming out in support of anything controversial."

"I just don't know what happened, why they did that," said Wolverton. "They just attacked us at the meeting. We weren't trying to fight anyone, we were asking for help. I didn't expect to be accused that way."

There was an analogy here between New Mexico and Montana. In one way, Wolverton and Herb Anderson were the counterparts of Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess: a cop and a local science advocate, both more oriented toward the mystery behind the reported mutilations than to the official position that they were due to predator damage. Both pairs of men were on the receiving end of a political backlash from local authorities that threatened their reputations—Valdez and Burgess from Rommel, and Wolverton and Anderson from Leland Cade and the Bozeman lab. The role of local politics in shaping the reality of the entire cattle mutilation phenomenon was apparent, and Kagan knew that it would become more so in each successive state to be visited. Politics was a factor which had been completely ignored by all the mutologists and mutilation journalists, so they had missed its influence and failed to see how much of the issue depended on public scrapping between different factions, and not on the purported weirdness of the mutilations themselves.

But there was an extra complication here: not only had Wolverton been badly used by the debunkers Cade and Hubbell, he had been turned into a saint of the mutilation movement by people like Tom Adams, who consistently assumed he was as rabid a believer in UFOs and mystery choppers as themselves. He and Anderson still were willing to accept an off-beat explanation for the mutilations, and yet they had succeeded in disproving, to their satisfaction, many of the pet notions of the mutology network. Yet the mutologists did not seem to be aware that they had done this.

"I'm unhappy about the way *Mystery Stalks the Prairie* worked out," said Anderson. "I didn't watch it as carefully as I could have. I was too busy at the time. All Donovan's UFO stuff got past me. If I had it to do all over again, I'd write the book myself."

Kagan asked him his opinion of Howard Burgess's theories.

"Burgess had no scientific backup," said Anderson.

"Look," said Wolverton, "it's all past history for me. I don't care, it's over."

A few hours later, Kagan called a reporter on the *Great Falls Tribune*, the largest city newspaper in the area. The man's name was Ron Rice, and he had been a reporter working with the police for almost forty years. Kagan had read some of the *Tribune*'s coverage of the 1975-76 mutilation reports, and it was relatively even-handed, even though it did tend to spotlight the strangeness of the incidents and the bafflement of the police.

"Keith Wolverton is a real fine dude," said Rice. "He's a level-headed guy. He's a very important figure in our rescue program. Those dogs he trained are terrific. They located 120 bodies after the Idaho floods a few years back. He's well-respected around here."

Kagan didn't doubt it. The strongest impression Wolverton had left with him was that of a man who had gotten into something far more complicated and politically explosive than he had anticipated, given it his best effort, and come out of it bruised and embittered for good reason.

Before they parted company, Kagan prevailed upon Wolverton to put him in touch with the rancher whose animal had had the hypodermic needle and empty cellophane envelope under its carcass. That night, Kagan drove out into the country to interview him.

The Man With No Name

When Kagan arrived, the rancher, his wife, and a neighbor couple were sitting at the kitchen table playing pinochle. They were not terribly friendly, merely cordial. They gave Kagan a hard chair in the corner to sit on, and then ignored him for half an hour.

When they finally put their playing cards away, the rancher's first words were, "Don't use my name."

His story about the reportedly mutilated cow found in 1978 went like this: he and a few other men had been cutting hay in a field about a half mile from the house. They were rained out, quit work, and came home. When they went back four days later, they found the dead animal.

"Its tail was sticking up into the air," said the rancher. "It had been dead about three days. The end of the tail was missing, but we found it not far away. All the flesh behind the jaw was gone clean, you could see the backbone in the wound. The whole bottom lip was gone, and the rectum was gone. The rectum was a clean-cut wound, not that far into the animal."

No veterinarian or veterinary pathologist had examined the animal to confirm that the wounds were in fact surgical.

He had called the sheriff's department. A deputy came out, took some photographs, and agreed that the animal had been mutilated. He did not turn the carcass over. Since the animal had been dead so long the deputy did not do any follow-up work, in line with Wolverton's directive about animals dead longer than twenty-four hours.

Then, the rancher himself called the local TV news office at KFBB-TV.

The TV crew came out, and two of them rolled the animal over and found the needle and empty packets underneath the animal. The rancher kept the needle and packets for the sheriff's office, which sent a man out to pick them up.

"It was a big, nineteen-gauge needle, not the kind you use for injections, but the kind you use to stick through a cow's side into its stomach to treat bloat, to let the gas out."

The rancher insisted that the packets had had a white residue inside them.

He said Wolverton told him the needle and packets had been sent to a lab in Salt Lake City for analysis.

Then the rancher's wife interrupted them and asked, "What about the letter?"

"What letter?" Kagan asked.

The rancher and his wife looked at each other.

"We got a letter from that Salt Lake lab a few weeks after the stuff was sent. It came here by mistake. It was supposed to go to the sheriff's office. The letter said that the needle and the packets had a good amount of residue in them for analysis, and that they expected some positive results soon.

"Not too long after that, the sheriff's office showed me a second letter they had gotten from the lab, telling that the results were negative, that there had not been enough stuff to sample and they had been unable to find out what was in the needle or the packets."

The rancher thought these two conflicting letters were a sign of a cover-up in process. He believed that, after the first letter had gone out, pressure from "high up" had been applied to the lab people, and that they had then written the second letter, lying about the inadequacy of the sample. He felt that this, along with the cattle mutilations, was part of some large government conspiracy, and that "someone" had put pressure on that lab to cover up their findings.

"Why?" asked Kagan.

"They're trying to put fear into people," said the rancher.

"But why?" asked Kagan.

"Just to do it," said the rancher. "It's just like that nerve gas thing in Utah years back. Maybe they're experimenting with something, too."

The rancher also believed that "someone" high up had put pressure on Wolverton and the sheriff's office to keep quiet about the mutilations. "I think the sheriff's office knows a lot more than they're telling, and they've been silenced," he said.

He felt that there was something mysterious about the effect that Leland Cade's article in the *Montana Farmer-Stockman* had had on veterinarians and ranchers in the area, making them very careful about reporting cattle mutilations for fear of public ridicule. He believed its influence was far greater than it should have been, and implied that the *Stockman*'s articles might have been part of the cover-up.

He also believed that the people from the lab at Bozeman were part of it.

"At that meeting, the Bozeman people made the ranchers look foolish. We don't want to be ostracized, so people have stopped talking about those cattle," he said. But rather than showing that he understood that the ranchers might be afraid to look foolish because they might actually have *been* wrong about a good many of the reported mutilations in the first place, he implied that the Bozeman lab people had, like the government, merely been trying "to put fear into people" to shut them up. Clearly, this man couldn't entertain the idea that the ranchers had been unable to tell the difference between surgical work and predator damage in the cases of 1975 and 1976. He, and they, had to save face.

This rancher was prime *Stigmata* material. Testimonies like his were the kind on which Adams and Linda Howe built their utterly unprovable notions about "silent sieges" of thousands of mutilations which now went unreported due to the nasty actions of the bad old agricultural labs and pathologists who kept finding predator damage.

Kagan, however, was interested in evidence. If he could see that first letter that came from the Salt Lake lab, the one that had come to the rancher by accident and started him thinking about cover-ups, he might be able to ferret out any real revelations, if there were any.

"I'd like to see the letter," he said.

The rancher and his wife looked at each other.

"Do you know where it is?" the wife asked.

"You had it last," he said. "Didn't you put it in the cabinet?"

They rummaged around in cabinets and drawers for a few minutes. The letter was nowhere to be found.

Suddenly, they seemed to become quite vague about this letter. Kagan asked them if they remembered the name of the lab.

They did not.

Had they shown it to the sheriff's office?

Of course, they had given it to Wolverton.

(The next day, Kagan called Wolverton and asked him about the first letter.

"What letter?" he had asked. "I never heard of any such letter before."

"But they told me they gave it to you," said Kagan.

"I never saw any letter," said Wolverton. "I only saw the one that said the analysis had shown nothing.")

The conversation then turned to mystery helicopters. The rancher said he had seen a helicopter two days before he found the steer. It was large, dark, and had no markings. He said he saw another one at 10:30 in the morning of the day he had estimated the cow had died. He claimed it was flying in dense fog and had momentarily broken out of the fog about a hundred feet off the ground. This one, too, was large, dark, and had no markings.

"I didn't think anything of it," he said.

Altogether, this was the kind of case which, when scrutinized closely, was full of holes. The only problem was the damned needle and packets found under the carcass. If this rancher had been the only person who had told Kagan about them, Kagan would not have believed him. But Wolverton had seen the items as well. Everything about the case was wrong, smelled bad, except that there had been some physical evidence. The only way the evidence could have been doubtful was if Wolverton was lying, and Kagan felt that he would have too much to lose. Besides, the local media boys had seen the needle too—had found it, in fact.

Kagan began to play with some ideas.

The first was that the needle and packets had been planted there by someone. Who had such a motivation? Well, the rancher did, if he was looking for some publicity, or was seeking to play a prank, as seemed plausible from the alacrity with which he had called the TV station. The TV crew might also have done it, to perk up a sagging local news scene or to take a poke at Bozeman and Cade. This kind of thing was not unheard of. One of the rancher's kids might have done it. He had several teenaged sons, and this was a perfect prank. Wolverton's deputy might have done it, to provide some evidence that might make his boss, Wolverton, look good after the beating he had taken from the *Stockman*.

Of course, these were all idle speculations, but they kept bouncing back at Kagan for one reason. Both Wolverton and the rancher had gone out of their way to say that the needle had been a very large one, not the type used for an injection, but the type used to poke through inches of cow hide, muscle, and gut to vent gases in the animal's stomach. The two glassine packets indicated that some injectable substance might have been used on the animal. But the needle was wrong. It was exactly the kind of missed detail that a hoaxer will leave behind.

One thing was certain, there was no way that this case was any kind of confirmed or even probable mutilation. And many factors pointed toward its being a complete fraud.

Choteau

The next day was Sunday. Kagan made an early start and drove the fifty miles to Choteau in Teton County, northwest of Great Falls. There he would meet Sheriff Pete Howard of Teton County, who had been deeply involved in the 1975-76 investigation with Wolverton and in whose area there had been many reported mutilations, along with several of the most spectacular UFO sightings.

He met the sheriff in a small diner across the road from the low, square, stucco building that was the sheriff's department. Although Choteau is the county seat of Teton County, it is a small town astride a widening of the two-lane highway, surrounded on all four sides by endless rolling wheat fields and pastures.

Sheriff Howard, a chunky, bullet-headed man with a grizzled crewcut, industrial-type black-framed glasses and a battered, small-brimmed Stetson hat, gave the appearance of being a tough customer. As soon as he and Kagan crossed to the sheriff's office, sat, and began to talk, Kagan was pleased to discover that Howard was low-keyed, articulate, and extremely intelligent, with plenty of subtle insights into the different elements of the cattle mutilation panic that had descended on Montana several years back. Kagan had been equally impressed by Wolverton, and he remarked to himself that, far from being the kind of unsophisticated, back-country boobs that many debunkers were prone to depict county sheriffs as, both men were most definitely not yokels. They might not be trained to make post-mortem assessments on the condition of dead cattle, but they were not fools, either.

Howard explained that at the time of the 1975-76 mute report wave about fifteen Montana counties had ultimately become involved, all logging cattle mutilation reports. The majority of the action, though, had taken place in Cascade and Teton Counties.

"All the information was pushed through into the Cascade Sheriff's Office," he explained. "Keith Wolverton ended up handling most of the work through his office."

The first mutilation reports in Teton County had started a few months before the wave hit in Cascade.

"Our first strange case was during Memorial Day weekend, 1975," Howard said. This would coincide almost exactly with Keith Wolverton's press conference to ask for public cooperation in the cattle mutilation investigation.

This first animal, according to the sheriff, had been a yearling heifer. The rancher's wife had seen the animal down, sick but alive. It had not been cut. Later, the rancher and his son had gone back to check it, and the cow was dead. They called the people from the local packing plant to come cut the animal up.

"They started cutting it apart, and someone realized it was in strange condition. The female organs were gone," said Howard.

Someone called a veterinarian, who looked at the carcass.

"He said that the organs had been expertly removed, very deeply cut out of the rear end," said Howard. "According to the vet, the ovaries and the internal sex organs were gone.

"No one had heard of cattle mutilation before this," he said. "No one thought much of it. It was just a strange occurrence. We only began to see how strange it was when everyone started talking about it. The heifer had been in the middle of a swampy bog. There were no tracks around it, not even its own. The investigators left their own tracks all over the place when they went out to look at it. It took about four or five days before the curiosity hit and people started talking."

The sheriff paused. "The vet, when he examined the animal, had said that in order to remove the female parts that way, he would have had to go into the animal's rear very carefully with both hands and dissect out the parts."

It was not very convincing. After all, the call had been made only *after* the slaughterhouse crew had begun cutting the animal apart. And who really knew if there were no tracks in the bog? On the one hand, Howard had said the rancher's wife had checked the animal before it died, so she must have been close enough to leave tracks. The investigators had left tracks, so the rancher's wife had to have left them too.

Also, the animal had been down and sick hours before it died. Its death was most likely due to natural causes. Since a supposedly mysterious cause of death was necessary even to begin to entertain ideas about a bizarre mutilation, this case did not fit the bill. Even the vet's assessment was questionable.

What was more interesting was Pete Howard's astute awareness of how this incident had evolved into the beginning of a mutilation wave.

"After this incident, the ranchers got very curious about it. They were talking a lot, they started spreading the word," he said.

"About a week after that incident, I got a call from a rancher way out in rough country west of Choteau. He said he had three dead heifers. He had watched the carcasses for three days after they died. Around the third day, he saw that the back ends were missing and the ears were gone. He reported these as mutilations."

The rancher, who, according to the mutologists, was supposed to be an expert on scavenger damage, had not realized that if animals were lying dead in the open for three days it would be natural for pieces to start disappearing as they had. It was almost silly that he had actually reported these as mutilations, yet it certainly supported Rommel's point that ranchers were not very good at distinguishing apparent predator activity from strange surgical work on mysteriously dead animals. Howard thought it was a bit ridiculous too.

"Right away, everyone wanted to associate these three with the first animal," he said. "But it was warm, the animals were bloated and it was really obvious that coyotes were a more reasonable explanation."

Howard sighed. "From that time on, every damned dead animal in the county was reported as a mutilation." This, again, was what had happened with Rommel's twenty-seven cases in New Mexico. Everyone started to report all dead animals as mutes, "just to be sure."

"I must have gone on 100 or 150 calls in 1975 and 1976," said the sheriff. "We never called them mutilations, the *Great Falls Tribune* did. The vets that saw these animals never called them mutilations."

And here was element number two in the mute *phenomenon:* press influence of public consciousness.

"Out of those hundred or so cases, there were maybe fifteen or twenty that were even a little bit questionable," Howard explained. "Most of the animals were so old and rotten you couldn't tell what had happened to them, let alone do a post mortem.

"We never got one as fresh as the first," Howard continued. "The vets all made their confirmation by visual examination and dissection on the spot. We never said the animals were cut, we just believed the vets when they said so. They were the experts, not us."

Apparently, none of the vets had used a microscope to determine the nature of the wound edge damage.

"Look," said Howard. "This country is full of coyotes, bear, and hundreds of other meat-eaters that will go for a carcass. In the summer, it's ninety or ninety-five degrees, these dead animals bloat up and smell, they attract the predators. So let's say the coyotes or whatever come over and start working on the carcass. Say they take an ear, or the back end. The rancher comes along and notices it's missing. Now, nobody, until they heard about this mutilation business, ever bothered to look very closely at the dead cows. No one ever bothered to notice if the ear or the back end was normally taken. Suddenly, they look and say 'That ear is missing, I wonder if it's significant,' because they've heard about mutilations."

Howard leaned back in his chair. "Hell, maybe the ears have *always* been taken by the coyotes, and no one ever noticed. Who knows if it's significant or not? I think in lots of cases the ranchers were just seeing things they never bothered to look at before, and thinking they were strange."

Howard had nailed one of the primary features of the mutilation *phenomenon*, had understood it from the beginning.

"In the summertime, the ranchers put their animals out in far-flung pastures, miles away from everything. It takes a big effort to go out and check on them, so they don't go very often." The point was that if the animals got sick or were poisoned, no one could watch the progression of natural sickness and death to know that the animals had not been killed and mutilated. This also underlined why so many of the reported mutilations had been so old that the idea that they could be surgically cut was absurd.

Howard then went on to talk about all the problems he, Wolverton, and the other sheriffs had had when they tried to get some assistance from the Bozeman laboratory in determining the status of reported mutilations.

"Right from the beginning, they put us off," he explained. "They wouldn't help us at all. They were saying it was predators from the beginning, even before they saw any samples. We had sent one tissue sample, from a reportedly muted horse, to Bozeman. They said they didn't have the proper facilities to test it, and they sent it back. We tried to send it to the state crime lab. They had problems too. The damned sample went back and forth for two or three months. Hell, they may have lost it for all we know. Then, we were spending so much money for gas, running around on these mutilation calls, that we tried to get some help from the state, a little extra money for expenses. They refused us too.

"Then the Livestock Board got involved, told us they wanted to have an inspector go out on all the calls. That was terrific. We wanted some expert help like that. But the board wouldn't pay for the inspectors' time. They wanted us to do it and we couldn't, so the inspectors never came. Then Bozeman told us they wanted us to haul the carcasses down there for analysis. We wanted that too, but we didn't have any pickup trucks to do it. We asked for help, and Bozeman refused. They kept telling us they wanted all the information, but they did nothing to help us go out and get it. I don't understand why they were so difficult about this. Bozeman is usually friendly and cooperative."

Howard's even voice was filling with resentment. Kagan could see how the lab's lack of cooperation might have sparked the ranchers' suspicions that there was a cover-up in progress.

"They kept telling us it was predators, but at the same time they kept telling us they couldn't do the proper tests to determine predator damage," he said. "It was a real paradox."

This sounded like bureaucratic stumbling around and the Bozeman lab's desire to avoid controversial issues.

"We even told them that if they thought it was predators we would help them prove that, just to end all the rumors and running around. 'Just examine our cattle deaths, and if one in a hundred is odd, then that's the one we'll concentrate on,' we said. We asked them to send us some lab specimens for comparisons, bones, something, some way to measure for predator tooth marks and evaluate the wounds. They just told us it would be a waste of time and money." And because the Bozeman lab had been so high-handed, the rumors kept on spreading, the mistaken mute reports mounted, willingly accepted by a panicky population. How easily they could have stopped the whole cycle in its tracks if they had just cooperated with the sheriffs.

Herb Anderson had finally tried to help the sheriffs and ranchers by putting together sample-taking kits and distributing them.

"Unfortunately," Howard explained, "once we had the kits, we never found a reported mutilation that was fresh enough to take a usable sample from."

Howard sighed. "At one point we asked Bozeman to send one of their men up to us for a few weeks. 'We'll take him on all our calls, and he can examine the animals himself,' we said. They refused. You'd think that, given that this state's general economy is based on ranching and agriculture, they would have been more interested. That's their job. But half the time they refused, and the other half they gave us no answers at all. I mean, we were willing to help them prove it was predators just to close the case, and they still wouldn't cooperate. But they had no problems when they came to that meeting in 1977 and tried to make fools of me and Keith and the rest of the sheriffs."

The source of Pete Howard's anger was plain. On one hand, Bozeman had not provided them with adequate support to make properly convincing evaluations of the animals, yet when they had done their best and shown the photographs and told of the word-of-mouth vet reports supposedly confirming the mutilations, Hubbell and the people from Bozeman had attacked them for inadequate evidence. Of course, technically Hubbell was correct, but it was the lab's refusal to help that had created the situation.

Howard pointed out that another of the bizarre patterns that the mutology people maintained was part of the mutilations, the taking of the "best" animal, thereby implying some sort of genetic testing or monitoring, had not shown up at all in Montana.

"We never lost one expensive animal to this. There are plenty of Simmentals around, and lots of better breeds of Hereford and Angus. None of them were ever reported as mutilated. It was strictly run-of-the-mill cattle," he said.

Next the sheriff spoke about mystery helicopter sightings and UFOs.

"Sure, we had those helicopter reports. In the only one where someone actually sighted choppers on the ground, it turned out to be two Canadian Air Force helicopters that had lost their way and set down in a field. There's a lot of copter traffic around the missile bases, too. I can't explain all those sightings, but I sure don't believe there was any connection between them and any dead cattle."

Howard pulled out a thick file of color photographs of reported mutilations from 1975 and 1976. He leafed through them with Kagan. Most of them were of animals that had either been dead a long time and were badly decomposed, or which did not resemble anything remotely surgical in appearance.

One photo showed the udder of a dead calf. The teats were gone, and the edges of the wound looked quite smooth. Howard pointed this out as a typical example of what was reported as a mutilation.

"You can't say anything in a case like this," he said. "Ants, birds, anything can remove a teat like this."

Howard had been with Kagan for almost seven hours. He had to leave; his Sunday was shot.

"I still get one or two calls each year on this," he said in parting, "but there's never anything to them."

Kagan's next stop was Laramie, Wyoming, where he would interview Dr. Leo Sprinkle.

4

Wyoming

The Farmer And The Well

By the time Kagan hit the Laramie airport it was close to midnight. The entire terminal consisted of a small room with one rent-a-car counter, where he was due to pick up his automobile.

The woman behind the counter was friendly, and asked Kagan what he was doing in town. When he replied that he was researching a book about cattle mutilations, she said her husband was a reporter on the local newspaper, the *Laramie Boomerang*, and that he knew about the subject. He was due to get off work in fifteen minutes. She telephoned him, and he told Kagan to come over to the newspaper office.

Kagan met the reporter, Pat Wolfinbarger, in the neat, modern newsroom of the *Boomerang*. Wolfinbarger introduced him to another reporter, Ron Franck, who had not been in Laramie when Wyoming had its bout of reported mutilations and UFO sightings in 1975 and 1976, but had written a retrospective feature about mutes just over a year ago. The three retired to a local bar.

Over icy bottles of Olympia beer, they discussed cattle mutilations, ranchers, and Dr. Leo Sprinkle, whom Kagan would meet the next morning.

Actually, Kagan already knew a good deal more about Pat McGuire than had been revealed in the film. Weeks before, Sprinkle had sent a package of materials relating to his work with hypnotic regression and mental images of contact with extraterrestrial beings. He'd also sent a copy of a lecture called "UFO Contactees: Captive Collaborators or Cosmic Citizens?" he'd delivered at the MUFON UFO symposium in Houston just two months before, the one at which Linda Howe had shown "Strange Harvest." In it Sprinkle listed forty-seven instances culled from his hypnotic regression files, in which people reported "impressions" of "encounters" with UFOs and seeming space aliens, which Sprinkle familiarly referred to as "UFOLK," as if he knew them personally. Sprinkle carefully explained how he administered certain standardized psychological tests to these people, and how the results placed all of them within the bounds of the acceptably sane. Included in the list of forty-seven were Pat McGuire and also Judy Doraty, the other hypnotic subject whose session had been used by Howe to "prove" that UFOs were responsible for cattle mutilations.

Actually, this paper had given us a very favorable impression of Dr. Sprinkle because, for all his orientation toward UFOs and his assertions that these hypnotically induced "memories" were fragments of actual experiences with extraterrestrial beings, he also stated clearly in the introduction to the paper that "The reader should be aware of my bias. I claim to have observed unusual aerial phenomena." He described the several occasions when he, often in the company of others, believed he had observed UFOs, both in daylight and at night. "Thus, over the years, I have changed from a 'scoffer,' to a 'skeptic,' to a 'believer' in the reality of the UFO phenomenon. The reader should be aware of my bias in evaluating my work with other UFO observers and with UFO contactees."

At least Sprinkle was honest. He never did claim that any of the experiences he extracted from his hypnotic subjects were in fact incontrovertibly real.

Pat McGuire was given several pages of special attention in Sprinkle's report. By Sprinkle's account, a central event in McGuire's UFO experience was his obsession with drilling a well on his property. Everyone McGuire tried to enlist in the expensive project of sinking this well had resisted the idea as "crazy," including his father and brothers. According to Sprinkle, McGuire insisted on digging the well even though he was told by drilling experts and geologists that there was no water where he wanted to put it. The well was sunk, and hit an underground river of tremendous force and volume that subsequently was able to supply millions of gallons of water per day.

Sprinkle connected this obsession of McGuire's in the face of the constant denigration of his well-digging idea with McGuire's first contacts with Sprinkle in 1976, during which he told of two cattle mutilations which had occurred on his ranch (neither was confirmed by a veterinarian or veterinary pathologist), and his claimed sightings of flying saucers and other strange lights in the sky over his property around the same time. It was at this point that, according to Sprinkle, McGuire had begun to believe that "UFOLK were responsible for the mutilations, as if 'they' were 'governors' and in control of human activities."

Starting in 1979, Sprinkle began to hypnotize McGuire. During these sessions, McGuire reported images that he had been taken to some sort of "Oval Room" (strangely reminiscent of the White House's Oval Office) for certain instructions and impressions about digging the well to be "implanted" in his mind by the UFO aliens. Sprinkle later explained that McGuire "accepts the possibility that he may have received 'instructions' in 1976 to begin plans for digging the well; he describes his efforts in digging the well to be similar to the compulsive behavior of the hero in the movie 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind.' Pat is puzzled by the impression, or memory from the UFOLK that they would 'bring the water' if he would dig the well . . ."

Sprinkle went on to explain that McGuire had recovered experiences of so-called "past lives" under hypnosis (another field of specialty for Sprinkle), as well as his UFO "memories."

What was most interesting to us, of course, was that here was a man, McGuire, who was of limited education and worldliness, who admitted to Sprinkle that he had difficulty in writing and spelling, and whom Sprinkle describes as an inarticulate speaker, repeatedly hypnotized by a UFO-believing Ph.D., an authority figure, and he had subsequently delivered up to the doctor impressions full of all the standard lore of the UFO mythology, right down to eventually ascribing his obsession with digging his well to supposed instructions from alien beings. How much had Sprinkle and his beliefs influenced the "acceptance" by Pat McGuire of such notions?

If McGuire had "accepted" the idea, then it would have to have been *presented* to him by someone else, most likely Dr. Sprinkle, and this called into question the validity of all his supposed UFO experiences. We were also leery of McGuire's supposed comparison of his own actions to the compulsive behavior of the hero in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Was the comparison his or Sprinkle's?

Either way, Sprinkle's reading of Pat McGuire and his well left no room for any alternative interpretations. And Sprinkle's paper showed that McGuire had been hypnotized by the UFO-biased psychologist *many times* before Linda Howe had chosen to include his supposed "recall" in her film, indicating that McGuire was not exactly untouched by influences and people who had shaped his memories and perceptions to conform to a UFO interpretation of cattle mutilations.

Over the second round of Olympias, Pat Wolfinbarger supplied quite a different view of McGuire's supposedly UFO-induced well. Wolfinbarger had written an article about the well for the paper in 1979. In the West, water is a matter of obsessive concern. When McGuire's well began pumping water, its ten-million-gallon-a-day output was approximately equal to the city of Laramie's output from its own water sources. The city government had been contemplating buying water from McGuire to pump to Laramie, thirty miles away. The well had made McGuire a local celebrity.

Wolfinbarger explained that geologists had known for years that there was water under McGuire's land, but they didn't know exactly where it was. Several unsuccessful attempts had been made to drill for water on the land, and had discouraged geologists from applying any more money to the endeavor. *This* was why they had cautioned McGuire against investing his own money in a well there.

In other words, *there was no need for space aliens to implant the notion of underground water mysteriously in McGuire's head, as Sprinkle had implied. Everyone knew there was water out there somewhere, they had merely been unable to strike it!*

"McGuire was concerned because since he had left farming with his father and brothers he hadn't been successful with his own land," Wolfinbarger explained. "When I spoke to him he seemed to have a strong 'I'll show them' attitude. McGuire wanted to prove himself. I think that everyone telling him that the well was a bad idea just made him more determined to drill it."

Like most people around Laramie, Wolfinbarger believed that McGuire had just been extremely lucky in his decision to sink his well where he did. In fact, when Wolfinbarger interviewed McGuire for his article, McGuire himself had said, "I was just lucky."*

McGuire had said nothing about UFOs or aliens implanting suggestions in him about the water, he had said nothing like what Sprinkle had claimed in his paper. Of course, Wolfinbarger had interviewed McGuire in September of 1979, several months *before* his hypno-regression sessions in the office of a UFO-oriented psychologist had begun. Apparently, McGuire had only begun "accepting" (from whom, from whom?) the idea that the notion to drill the well had been "implanted" in his mind by aliens *after he had been placed in trances a number of times by the good UFO-believer doctor.* One of the things Kagan intended to find out was exactly how much Dr. Sprinkle might have implanted, consciously or unconsciously, images of UFOs in the minds of his subjects. To this end, Kagan would ask the doctor to hypnotize him.

Sprinkle made no secret of the fact that he was a consultant for APRO (the Aerial Phenomenon Research Organization), an unofficial, pseudo-scientific "investigatory" group that concerned itself with UFOs. And, along with the paper that included McGuire's story, Sprinkle had sent us a bound, 130-page booklet entitled the *Proceedings of the Rocky Mountain Conference on*

**Laramie Boomerang*, September 30, 1979.

UFO Investigation. This was a national conference exclusively for UFO contactees and abductees which had been conceived, coordinated and sponsored by Sprinkle himself, and which had been held at the end of May, 1980. In the text were the accounts of about a dozen people who had "remembered" incidents in which they believed they had been abducted, examined, and instructed by space aliens. Their depositions included not only their "remembered" experiences, but also instructions and philosophical teachings they had received from the UFO aliens (all of which sounded like slightly reworked versions of Jesus's love-thy-neighbor and eventual salvation-from-above doctrines), descriptions of the designs and propulsion principles of the supposed alien spacecraft, and even communications they believed they had been receiving, either telepathically or through such means as automatic writing and possession, from extraterrestrial entities.

Dr. Leo

Early the next morning Kagan headed for the University of Wyoming, just across the road from his hotel, to meet with Dr. Sprinkle.

Kagan had no idea what to expect from him. The man's writings betrayed nothing of his personality except that, despite his firm belief in UFOs and space aliens, he seemed to lack the kind of dramatic posturing of all the other UFO/mutologists. Kagan was surprised when Sprinkle emerged from his office. The doctor was quite tall, six feet three or so, and had the lanky build of an ex-basketball player. He was wearing a light green polyester leisure suit, the trim of which was cut in the curved flourishes of Western styling.

As they entered his office, Kagan noticed that it was full of UFO-oriented materials. On a shelf was a bust of the head of a supposed extraterrestrial being; bald, teardrop-shaped head, huge, catlike eyes, tiny nostril holes, and small mouth. This was the description of the space aliens that had become the one most frequently reported by most contactees since Betty and Barney Hill believed they saw beings like it in their hypnotically recovered "abduction" experience in the early 1960s. This particular alien had become state-of-the-art, as it were, in the UFO subculture, and was the model for the aliens in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Sprinkle's bookshelves were packed with dozens of books about UFOs, most notably with several by Jacques Vallee and the famous and usually misquoted *Flying Saucers* written by C. G. Jung.

Sprinkle sat at his desk, and Kagan sat in what he was sure was the overstuffed modern reclining chair which Judy Doraty and Pat McGuire had occupied during their trances in the Howe film. The chair was extremely comfortable, and Kagan reflected that if you were exhausted, as he was from his incessant traveling over the last ten days, you could easily slip off to sleep in it.

Sprinkle had a warm, sincere manner, a patient attitude, and a palpable genuineness about him. He also had an explosive and good-natured sense of humor. Whenever they hit something in conversation that titillated him, he would slap his knee, throw back his head, let loose with a cowboy yell, "Yee-haw!" and laugh loudly.

"Cattle mutilations are not really a big interest of mine," Sprinkle explained. "I only ran across them in conjunction with my work on UFO contactees. You should talk to Linda Howe, Tom Adams, and David Perkins. They know more than most people about the subject."

Instead of discussing cattle mutilations, then, they spoke about hypnosis, the nature of hypnotic regression, and the meaning of the mental images reported by the so-called contactees.

Sprinkle's UFO hypnosis subjects came to him in various ways, usually referred by others who had had similar experiences, or by UFO organizations like APRO, or by people who belonged to the UFO subculture. He was known in all these quarters. Right from the beginning, Sprinkle was straightforward about the nature of the UFO and space alien images reported by these people.

"There's no way to test whether or not these are actual experiences," he said. "Of course, it could easily be the result of a person fabricating the images and experiences via their unconscious and imagination. No one knows. I prefer to accept them as the recall of actual experiences, but there's no way to prove that."

Linda Howe had neglected to mention this when she used McGuire's and Doraty's sessions to "prove" her sensationalistic UFO case for the cattle mutilations.

"I believe that some of these may not be actual physical experiences as such," Sprinkle explained. "They might be a kind of out-of-body experience like astral traveling. Or they might be images purposely injected into these people's minds by the extraterrestrials to make them believe they had had the contact experiences. Then again, I believe that some of them are actual face-to-face experiences, since some of the contactees report marks on their bodies where they believe they have been examined. But then again, I know that these things can also be induced on the body by the person himself, psychophysiologically, by their unconscious."

Kagan asked him, "Can you ever be sure that these regression stories are *not* confabulations, imaginative fantasies concocted by the person's own mind?"

"You can't be sure," said the doctor. "I don't ultimately *know* whether they're real or not. The point," Sprinkle emphasized, "is not whether these experiences are really real. The point is that they are *emotionally* real to the people who report them. They have all the substance of real experience to them, and if they try to repress them, they will cause the person to manifest the same kind of neurotic symptoms as when someone consciously or unconsciously tries to repress an actual, mundane experience in his life."

"All I know," he said, "is that these people *get better* after they regress under hypnosis, recover these contactee memories, and finally accept them as real, instead of repressing them or denying them.

"Sometimes people will come to me. They're troubled, anxious, and they don't know why. When I regress them, they recall a UFO contact experience and they react to it as the source of their psychological discomfort, as a repressed trauma. Once they accept it, their anxiety and emotional discomfort go away.

"The other type of patient has an actual conscious memory of such a UFO experience. They won't talk about it, they feel people will say they're crazy if they reveal it. They become highly anxious, troubled. When they're regressed and relive the experience and then accept it, the associated problems go away."

Technically, Kagan reflected, this was good, basic psychotherapy technique. But he couldn't help wondering if Sprinkle merely implanted the UFO imagery into his suggestible patients' minds, unwittingly through his own UFO bias perhaps, and thereby gave them a symbol to which to attach their neuroses, while they failed to uncover more mundane and deeper sources for their problems. After all, it is a fact that a patient will respond with whatever symptoms his doctor thinks he ought to have, especially in the realm of psychological illness. Exorcism by a priest served the same function long before the advent of psychology. It was not unreasonable that Sprinkle's UFO regressions could work the same way. These regression patients were brought to Sprinkle precisely because he was known to work around recovered memories of UFO experiences. This would mean that before the people even met Sprinkle, they either were predisposed to believe in UFO aliens or were surrounded by other people who did, who referred them to him. In other words, it was more than likely that the people who ended up on Sprinkle's analytic couch got there because they had *already* accepted the notion of extraterrestrial beings so strongly that the belief could be used to "cure" them.

Sprinkle then went on to explain the process by which these believed events might be psychologically handled by the hypnotic subjects.

"These mental images seem to give people something they need," he said. "It might have something in common with the human need for spiritual experience. Once they accept the possibility that the experience has actually happened, their mental images will reflect back to them whatever they need psychologically. They can accept it as a 'nuts and bolts' experience with a real spaceship, an actual piece of hardware, or they can integrate it as a fantasy, or as some kind of psychic experience. Their notion of UFOs and extraterrestrials will conform to the structure dictated by their own basic personality.

"Perhaps the human race is being given, with these images, the opportunity to make the UFO phenomenon what it wants," he said. "After they locate these contact experiences under hypnosis, these people are converted to a doctrine of the Golden Rule and a universal love for mankind."

"But isn't that just a slight reinterpretation of basic Christianity?" asked Kagan. "Isn't it just a rehash of an established set of spiritual principles with the imaginary addition of space creatures instead of angels, and spaceships instead of crucifixes?"

"Yes," said Sprinkle. "It's a space-age religious conversion.

"Look," said the doctor. "It may work out that the UFO experiences will be explained by the lack of middle-class people who have these experiences. Sophisticated psychologists whose patients are from the middle and upper classes can explain compulsions and neuroses to their patients from a psychological point of view. People who are less sophisticated can grab onto the UFO image as an explanation for their compulsions, anxieties and neuroses.''

Sprinkle explained, again, that he personally believed that there were beings who didn't need physical bodies to live, that they might exist on an alternate level of reality, and be using the UFO contact images to attract our attention to their religious message.

''The crucial question is not whether or not these UFO experiences are actually occurring,'' he said, ''but rather how we are going to respond to them. There's evidence to support any hypothesis you want. I have chosen the one that makes the most sense to me, based on my own experience. Intellectually, I don't know if UFOs are real, but emotionally they work for me.''

Here Sprinkle began to refer to cattle mutilations. ''I believe they are occurring,'' he said. ''If they can't be explained by predators, by cults, by the CIA, the evidence points in that direction.'' Sprinkle's ''evidence'' was what he had been given by Howe, Perkins, and Tom Adams, so here the doctor was woefully short of enough reliable data to make a rational assessment.

''I've interviewed five people who have had direct, face-to-face encounters with UFOLK taking cattle or doing mutilations,'' said Sprinkle.

Of course, given that he himself acknowledged that the UFO experiences reported to him might just as well be imaginary, this proved absolutely nothing.

Sprinkle explained that according to his beliefs the cattle mutilations could be part of ''something like an audio-visual show,'' being given to us by the UFO people, as part of their whole program of implanting images in the minds of human beings.

Kagan asked him why he thought UFO occupants might want to mutilate cattle.

''I really don't know,'' said Sprinkle. And then he delivered, in quick succession, some ideas promoted by David Perkins and other mutologists.

''Perhaps it has something to do with the way we're poisoning our planet. Perhaps the mutilations are to teach us something about that, and we're supposed to catch on. Maybe it's just one more way to conduct the main business of UFOs, to confuse us and teach us that we don't have a full grasp of the functioning of the world and the universe. Perhaps they're taking the eyes and

genitals to teach us we have a lot to learn about animals, the world, and ourselves.

''Perhaps the point is that they're *not* taking the meat, the part we eat. Perhaps this is to allay the fear that a higher life form might 'feed' on us in some way, literally or spiritually. Perhaps the message is that they will not hurt us, symbolically 'eat' us,'' he said.

''Or maybe the mutilations are a kind of alarm clock to wake us up, to get us to re-experience that we're *not* all-knowing.'' Just like some of the Almighty's demonstrations to the Israelites, Kagan noted. ''It's a great way to get the attention of ranchers, police and scientists,'' Sprinkle observed.

Sprinkle explained that he had never really done an in-depth examination of a cattle mutilation case. ''I just recently started coming across cattle mutilation stories told by contactees,'' he explained. ''Actually, my first contact with mutes was through the Snippy the horse case in Alamosa, in 1967. I was called by the horse's owner because of all the UFO theories about the horse's death. But the first real connection I heard of between UFOs and cattle mutilations was through Pat McGuire in 1976, when he called me and told me he had seen UFOs and that his cattle were being mutilated.''

Again, Sprinkle emphasized his main point. ''Belief in UFOs is just like the belief in Santa Claus. It doesn't matter if Santa doesn't actually exist. If the *belief* in him changes someone's life, like the UFO recalls change the lives of these contactees, then Santa, and the UFOs, *might as well* exist. I can't legitimately claim that these people had a real physical experience with aliens or spacecraft. But I do maintain that they *believe* they had these experiences, and the proof of their belief is that their lives change.''

Kagan asked him to be more specific about his own actual beliefs.

''I believe that there are actual UFOs, actual spacecraft,'' he said. ''I believe that there are extraterrestrial beings in those craft. And I believe that these craft do land here, and thev do abduct people.

''But if you should ask me if they exist in a physical sense, I would have to say 'I don't know.'

''UFOs are assuming a religious significance,'' he continued. ''The process is exactly the same as good, old-fashioned, formal, fundamentalist religious conversion. For years, science was our religion. The UFO phenomenon has combined science, technology, and old-fashioned spiritual religion."

Sprinkle really had a head of steam now. He had a big smile on his face. He loved the paradoxical nature of his position.

"Do I believe in UFOs?" he asked. "Yes! Is there any proof of the existence of UFOs? No! Do I think there will ever be sufficient physical evidence to prove they exist? *I don't think so!*"

With this, Sprinkle slapped his knee, threw back his head, and hollered, "Yee—Haaa!" He was revelling in the utter paradox and unprovability of his position.

Through his laughter Sprinkle said, "Let's go get some lunch."

Sky Dreams

After the meal, they returned to his office.

"Let's try an experiment," Kagan suggested. "I have no conscious or unconscious feeling of any contact with UFOs or space aliens. I'm a good hypnotic subject. Why don't you put me under, and let's see if I come up with any UFO images?"

"Fine," said Sprinkle.

Specifically, Kagan was looking for two things. First, if he disgorged a UFO experience it might mean that the subconscious image was something that anyone, believer or not, could concoct, which fundamentally had no meaning unless one chose to assign it one. The other thing he was looking for was any influence Sprinkle himself might inject into the hypnotic session, any way he might actually control, through his own suggestion, his subjects' consistent "recall" of UFO extraterrestrial events.

Kagan lay back in the deep, soft chair and closed his eyes as Sprinkle began to intone his low hypnotist's litany about relaxation, floating, letting go. Kagan had been hypnotized before and he liked the trance state, the sense of being a half-degree removed from consciousness, yet not so far gone that there was the loss of control associated with sleep. It was a light departure, where all faculties remained sharp while the mind and body relaxed. He quickly went down through the folds of the initial stages and into a deep trance.

For a long while, Sprinkle led him through relaxation exercises, repetitions of floating, letting go, unhanding the tight grip of conscious concentration on his mind. Finally the doctor asked Kagan to review his memories of previous events for any unusual early feelings from childhood, or any outright UFO-type events.

A recurring dream from his childhood immediately suggested itself to Kagan. He had always had a conscious recollection of it; it was a pleasant dream. The analytical part of his mind consciously offered it up since the dream concerned itself with objects flying through the sky. None of the objects resembled a UFO, nor did the mood of the dream have any of the atmosphere of a contact experience about it, but it was the best he could do under the circumstances, and even in the hypnotic state he wanted to go along with Sprinkle's quest for UFO experiences to see where it would lead.

"The dream has nothing to do with UFOs," said Kagan. "I'm five or six years old, standing outside on a clear sunny day. I'm watching gigantic objects moving slowly through the sky. They're just hanging there, moving slowly, like balloons or blimps. They're not very high, maybe 500 feet off the ground. What's terrific about this dream is that all the objects are very heavy metal or concrete structures that should not be able to float around like that. One is a gigantic oil tanker, maybe 1,000 feet long. I can see the rusted hull. It's heavy steel, thousands of tons. But it's floating through the air like a balloon. Another object is a huge section of a steel suspension bridge, lots of steel and girders. I know all these things are extremely massive, dense, and they shouldn't be up there like that. I have a feeling of awe and wonder, because even at this early age I know it's impossible for them to be up in the air like that. I have a very strong sense of awe and pleasure—I'm seeing something special, almost a display of some kind. There's a great sense of satisfaction in watching this."

Beyond this, Kagan could come up with nothing else. Then another recurring dream suggested itself to him. In this one, he had the sensation of being suspended high in the air over one end of an immensely high and long suspension bridge, like the George Washington Bridge over the Hudson River in New York. This dream did not evoke such pleasant feelings for him.

"I'm hovering over the land at one end of the bridge, looking at it as it stretches across the river. The bridge is much larger than any I've ever seen—the Golden Gate, the Verrazano, any of them. It's maybe a thousand feet high over the water, the towers another thousand feet high. Much wider than any real bridge.

Lots of extremely complex approach rampways and many, many lanes across the highway on the bridge. It stretches away into a fog. I can't see the other end, where it hits the other side of the river. I feel that it's miles, many miles to the other side. I feel fear. For some reason, I have to cross this bridge, but I don't want to. A feeling that I'll be unprotected crossing the bridge. Also a feeling that it's too high, too large to stay up. It might collapse."

Sprinkle suggested that Kagan try to cross the bridge. Kagan was willing to try. After all, it was only a dream. Sprinkle told him to imagine any kind of vehicle he wanted to take him across the bridge. Kagan imagined a very fast, hopped-up red convertible, something like a fuel-injected 1962 Chevy, with good horse power and roadworthy weight. Kagan put himself into the car, aimed it across the bridge, and jammed his foot down on the accelerator. The car quickly glided out into the middle of the bridge's span.

The road sped by. He was still out in the middle of the bridge's dizzyingly high center span. Despite his speed, he did not seem to be making progress toward the other side. The bridge road was so high that there were clouds beneath the level of the roadway. Every so often he caught glimpses of the earth and river below between the moving clouds. It looked like the view from an airplane. The height and speed made him uncomfortable.

"I'm not going anywhere," he told Sprinkle. "I'm moving fast, but it's as if the car is on a treadmill." Kagan still had the desire to drive across the bridge and reach land as soon as possible, because of his fear that the span would collapse. Judging from the downward view, he was driving along on a massive concrete and steel roadway about 2,000 feet off the ground.

"Imagine that you can move forward in time, then," Sprinkle suggested. "Where will the car be in an hour, two hours, as long as you want?"

Kagan moved ahead six hours. The car sped along in what looked like the same spot, still in the middle of the span. He moved ahead ten years. Still, the car raced along, no closer to the fog-enshrouded far end of the bridge. Kagan was feeling more and more uncomfortable stuck in the middle of this too-high bridge. He suddenly remembered his first time in an airplane. It had been in a small, yellow Piper Cub. He would feel much safer at 2,000 feet in a nice, aerodynamic, little fabric-covered plane with a reassuringly racketing motor. He wanted to get off that bridge.

"I'd feel a lot safer in an aircraft," he told Sprinkle.

He was about to describe the Piper Cub when Sprinkle quickly interjected, "Imagine yourself in a spacecraft."

It took a minute for this comment to sink in. Leo was agressively suggesting that he imagine himself in a spacecraft. Kagan had not said *spacecraft*, he had said, and meant, an *airplane*. Yet Sprinkle, though he had not impinged much on Kagan's narrative, had quickly taken this opportunity to *willfully insert a spacecraft into his hypnotic images*. Kagan felt his mind working in two distinct parts. One part shuffled through his memory of visual images to try to find a spacecraft interior to fulfill Sprinkle's request. The other segment of his consciousness kept saying, "Here it is. He's steering your mental images. He's taking this opportunity to try to implant the image of a flying saucer into your recall. Sprinkle believes in saucers and aliens; therefore his hypnotic subjects report recalls of them *because he steers them in that direction*!"

The mood of the trance had been broken. The atmosphere of the dream no longer felt like Kagan's own. From a very deep trance, he suddenly snapped back to normal.

He looked right at Dr. Sprinkle. "Leo," he said. "You tried to insert a flying saucer into my dream when there was none."

Dr. Sprinkle smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

Kagan didn't press the point. He didn't like the doctor any less, but Sprinkle had just demonstrated how much he had probably been responsible for the UFO imagery reported by so many of his hypnotic subjects. It meant that none of Sprinkle's case histories could be taken seriously, because his role as hypnotist could have been the single most powerful factor in introducing UFO images into the subjects' memories.

Not only was hypnotic regression a generally unreliable means of extracting believable information, but Sprinkle had just demonstrated that he was not above pushing a hypnotic subject into a UFO "recall" when the subject failed to produce one himself. Sprinkle had been right. The largest single element in the UFO mentality was one of religious faith, belief. Real proof, unbiased research, seemed to have no part in it at all.

5

Colorado

Linda Howe

The next afternoon, Summers flew into Denver Airport, and we joined up. The first person we would meet there was the inimitable Linda Howe, at a chic restaurant in Denver's newly revivified Larimer Square. We would not, we decided, get into any arguments with her about UFOs or the illogicality of her film's argument. This would be just another interview, and we would seek and share information with Howe just as we did with everyone else.

When Howe finally arrived, we recognized her immediately: she was in her mid-thirties, small and attractive, with brown hair and freckles. The three of us immediately began talking about cattle mutilations. We asked Howe about the samples she and UFO buff Dr. Richard Sigismund had taken from Bob Blake's reportedly mutilated horse in Simla, Colorado, in May. They claimed to have found a fluorescent patch of hide below the animal's eye, and had sent it to Schoenfeld Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for analysis.

"The analysis turned up nothing," she said. "Zero. The hide fluoresces, according to Schoenfeld, but he can't find anything abnormal about it."

She seemed extremely disturbed, in fact unhappily surprised, that Schoenfeld had turned up nothing unusual. Like the rest of the mutologists, Howe found *normal* test results to be unusual, rather than vice versa.

Still, the initial reports about the fluorescence had struck us as odd, particularly because of the fluorescent patches Howard Burgess and Gabe Valdez had found on Manuel Gomez's animals two years before. Before we had left on the trip we had put the question of fluorescence on hides and in cattle bones to Dr. John King, our veterinary pathologist at Cornell.

"Ignore it," he had said. King explained that there were several common dietary conditions that would cause a cow's or horse's bones to fluoresce under ultraviolet light. And he pointed out a very obvious fact: many common materials are fluorescent; we just never notice the property because we never see them under ultraviolet light. This array of common materials includes various plastics, inks, dyes, and many kinds of industrial materials: lubricants, grease, oil, packaging materials, glues, and the like.

"As far as the fluorescent patches on those cow hides go," said King, referring to the Gomez cattle from 1978, "you've got to keep in mind that these animals constantly brush up against barn doors, hinges, chutes, farm machinery, troughs, and any of these could easily have some type of grease, oil, paint, or what have you on them that will not fluoresce under normal light but will show up under black light. That stuff most likely got on their hides that way—by accident. It could even have come from the chute they ran the animals through when they conducted their test."

Howe seemed unaware of this, and automatically ascribed any fluorescence on dead animals to some bizarre source. No wonder she was mystified when the lab results came back normal.

She talked about the Judy Doraty UFO "abduction" and cattle mutilation case she had used in her film. She mentioned the experience of a newspaper reporter in Colorado who claimed to have been driving at night and have seen a "huge UFO pass over his car, with hundreds of colored lights on it." Her description sounded exactly like the image of the huge UFO mother ship from "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."

"What do you really think, Linda?" we asked. "Do you really think it's UFOs causing the cattle mutilations?"

"Most of the evidence points that way," she responded seriously. Her attitude was no different from what had been manifest in "Strange Harvest." Her perceptions and thoughts were completely colored by her belief in UFOs and space aliens, and yet she persisted in trying to present her rumors, unsupported assertions, and unproven claims as real facts.

Howe also spoke at length about a man named Mervin Casey, who lived near Colorado Springs. We knew who Casey was. In 1976, he had written and published a paperback book about cattle mutilations with the imaginative title of *The Mutilators*. The book was fiction, based on the wave of mute reports from

Colorado in 1975. The book had some good characters in it, county sheriffs and ranchers, and a quick-moving but extremely confusing plot line that followed the ranchers' and sheriffs' deputies' progressive frustration at mounting numbers of mutilated cattle and at a mysterious black helicopter which kept appearing over the rangelands during the mutilations. Ultimately, the ranchers and sheriffs' men set up an ambush and shoot down the helicopter. In the book's chaotic last pages, they rush to the site of the burning helicopter and find three men strung up in a tree, their genitals removed in apparent imitation of the cattle mutilations that have been occurring.

The most interesting thing about Casey's book, however, was that on its very last page there was a "note from the author" explaining that, although the book was fiction, there had been one fact not included in it that had appeared in the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*. Surrounded by quotation marks, indicating that it had been taken verbatim from one of the newspaper stories, the quote read:

"On October 16, 1975, the horribly mutilated body of a woman was found in downtown Denver, Colorado. Her breasts and sex organs had been removed and she had been disemboweled."

Aside from the fact that the snippet did not read like newspaper copy, we wanted to check the files of the *Post* and the *News* for the accuracy of Casey's supposed human mutilation. We recognized, of course, why he had inserted this item at the end of the book. It was a part of the scare effort that had intermittently been mounted on the part of various mutilation buffs, that the mysterious cattle mutilators would soon progress to human victims.

Linda Howe apparently classed Mervin Casey as a highly reliable source for reports of "confirmed" mutilations.

"Casey personally went out on over a hundred mutilation reports in 1975 and 1976," said Howe. "And a lot of those never made it into the newspapers."

Howe obviously believed everything Casey told her, without checking. She offered us some "proof" that the cattle mutilations were something beyond the reach of normal earthly occurrences.

"Mervin told me that two ranchers had seen two helicopters land in a pasture at night. Both choppers had bright lights under them. The ranchers were terrified. They called Casey. The next night, he drove to the area and parked on a high point over the pasture and waited.

"He told me 'I felt it before I heard or saw it.' He had a flash of irrational fear. Then a helicopter with a light rose over the ridge. His fear became even greater. He said he didn't hear the chopper, even though he was only 500 yards from it.

"That irrational fear he had, it's like a premonition. People report it in connection with the helicopters and mutilations. It means something, I'm sure," she said.

What could we say? How do you tell someone that someone else's reported flash of fear is not proof of anything, except that he was afraid at that moment?

Beyond information like this, Howe told us nothing new. The dinner was excellent, the wine was good. We left her and went to our hotel.

The Satchel

The next day we were due to see Carl Whiteside of the CBI, just to check in and see if he had anything new to offer us. First, we stopped at the Denver Public Library to see if we could find the newspaper story about the mutilated woman that Mervin Casey had included at the end of his novel.

We easily located the articles. Neither the clip from the *Rocky Mountain News* nor the one from the *Denver Post* read in any way close to the supposed quote that Casey had included in his book. This meant that Casey had concocted the quote, a more dramatic description than either of the real news articles, from the actual coverage. In the ethics of journalism, Casey had done something extremely distasteful: he had made up false coverage of an event and tried to pass it off as an actual quote. He had lied.

The article in the *Rocky Mountain News* reported not that parts of the woman's body had been removed, as Casey's bogus quote had read, but that her breasts and sex organs had been mutilated. She had been obviously and brutally murdered, her abdomen slit open and her throat cut, and had over a dozen knife wounds in her body. The body had been dumped in a Denver alley. Police records had identified the woman as an active prostitute who had several aliases and had been arrested several times. It was the sort of maniacal ripper murder that occurs dozens of times every year around the country. It was clearly not connected to cattle mutilations.

When we got to Carl Whiteside's office, we told him we had met Linda Howe the night before. He made a noise somewhere between an exasperated moan and a low growl. We asked him if he liked the way she had presented him in "Strange Harvest."

"What do you think?" he shot back.

It was plain that Whiteside knew he had been taken by Howe, his straightforward testimony warped and subverted to make it appear that he was still confused and mystified by the cattle mutilations.

We talked again about the dynamics of the mutilation *phenomenon.*

"You've got a big problem with this thing," he explained. "You see, once you can prove that even one animal was cut by a knife—and we were able to show that nine of them were—then everyone goes wild. They don't hear the part about how the animals that were cut died from natural causes, so the cutting was pranksters who had found some dead cows and sliced them up to have a little fun. Right away everyone decides that because these few were cut, *all* of them have been cut, and you have to start *disproving* all the ones people claim have been surgically dismembered. Of course, this is an impossible position, because no matter how well you can disprove the claims of surgery, the rumors keep right on coming. No one believes you."

We asked him again about cult activity in Colorado at that time, since the likelihood that the tiny percentage of actual mutilations was cult-related was looming larger and larger in our research.

"We ran extensive undercover investigations on cults around that time," he said. "There were plenty of cults around then, most of them near Colorado Springs. They were into black masses and all kinds of things. We could prove that these groups existed, but we could never prove that they were involved in any criminal activities, including cattle mutilations. This doesn't mean they weren't responsible for a few of those animals. It just means we were never able to gather any evidence on it."

Whiteside sighed. "It wouldn't have mattered anyway. Even if we had proved that some cult group did it, arrested the perpetrators, and successfully prosecuted them, the thing would have gone on and on. There would have been more claims from the UFO believers and cattle mutilation people, to disprove the validity of the arrest. You've got to understand, those people simply will not accept an earthly, normal solution to this thing. They *want* it to be flying saucers or a government conspiracy. They won't accept anything else. So we could have arrested and convicted all the cultists we wanted to at that time and it wouldn't have made any difference. They wanted spacemen or the CIA.

"We really took a beating from Dorothy Aldridge at the *Gazette-Telegraph,*" he said. "Our whole point was this: yes, we found some animals that had actually been cut up after natural death. So what? This did not make cattle mutilations into any real problem in this state. There was no one case in which it could be proven that any animal was killed with the express purpose of mutilating it. That was what was important, but Aldridge and the others couldn't see that. So they accused us of a cover-up.

"And there was all that trouble we had with the sheriffs. They were clearly divided into believers and non-believers. The believers were disenchanted with our results, it wasn't what they wanted to hear. So instead of continuing to use the lab facilities at CSU through us, they cultivated their own local veterinarians, did their so-called research without the benefit of the proper facilities or personnel, and kept coming up with more mutilation stories."

Whiteside then moved on to speak of Senator Schmitt's 1979 conference in Albuquerque. "I went there feeling that, from what I understood, there were two distinct and separate phenomena: there are UFOs, and there are cattle mutilations. When I got to the conference, I saw that the UFO contingent was there in force and that they were trying to give credence to their belief in UFOs by trying to tie UFOs and cattle mutilations together. They were trying to use the cattle mutilation reports to prove that UFOs and space aliens visit the earth.

"Like this guy Richard Sigismund," Whiteside said. "He doesn't know anything about cattle, he's a UFO buff. His whole speech at the conference had nothing to do with cattle mutilations. He's trying to revive Project Bluebook and get the government to make him the head of it. He's using this whole thing to promote himself.

"The conference lost its whole direction," he continued. "The sideshow took over the circus. Once the speakers started coming up, the cattle mutilations became a secondary issue that was only being used by them to support their UFO theories."

Finally, we asked Whiteside about the one item of greatest interest to us at this point. We were after a piece of physical evidence, perhaps the only one that had ever existed in the mute phenomenon.

In several of the articles about the cattle mutilations, we had run across references to a mysterious plastic satchel that had been found in Colorado at the time of the cattle mutilation wave. It was variously described as government issue material and Air Force gear, and was said to have contained a scalpel, some soiled surgical gloves, and some parts from a cow or a bull. This satchel was always mentioned in passing, and as far as we knew none of the mutologists or mutilation journalists had bothered to try to follow up on it. Human murder cases had been cracked with far less substantial evidence. Why, we wondered, had nothing seemed to come of the satchel during the CBI investigation? Had it actually existed, or was it just another rumor figment? Did it still exist, and could we see it?

"Oh, sure, that satchel," said Whiteside. "We got nowhere with it." He rummaged in his file box and pulled out a CBI report. Apparently, a CBI agent working in Lincoln and Washington Counties had gone out to look at a reportedly mutilated animal in Washington County. In his opinion, the animal, a heifer calf which was missing only its anus area, had had this part removed from it with a sharp instrument after death. A CBI lab report later confirmed only that the rear end had been cut with a sharp instrument, but revealed nothing about the manner of the animal's death. Aside from the missing anus, there was nothing at all unusual about the carcass.

In the last paragraph, almost as an afterthought, the agent noted that the day after he had examined this calf an undersheriff from Lincoln County, many miles away from this animal, had reported that someone found "A plastic valise (about the size of a legal pad)... near the driveway of a prominent farmer in Lincoln County. The valise contained a scalpel, part of a cow's tongue, an ear, and several plastic (arm's length) artificial insemination gloves." None of the parts in the satchel matched parts missing either from the latest heifer calf or from any other recently reported mutilations. This, of course, made it impossible to link that satchel to any specific case of a reportedly mutilated animal.

"And what happened?" we asked.

"Nothing," said Whiteside. "The valise and contents were examined here. We verified that there was a scalpel in it, also the gloves. And the blood on the scalpel was bovine, from a cow. But we couldn't go any further with it. The parts didn't match any of the reportedly mutilated animals we had seen. And no one had seen anyone drop the satchel in the farmer's front yard, so we had no idea who put it there."

"But didn't you investigate?" we asked.

"No. It was in the jurisdiction of the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, and they wanted to investigate the case, so we let them do it without interference."

"And what did they come up with?"

"Nothing, as far as I know," Whiteside replied.

Tomorrow, we decided, we would go and see the sheriff of Lincoln County.

We thanked Whiteside and left.

Elbert

That evening, after arranging to meet with the Lincoln County sheriff the next day, we drove to the town of Kiowa in Elbert County to speak with Sheriff George Yarnell. It was in Elbert County that the 1975 mutilation wave had really gotten off the ground. The first dozen or so reports had come from here, and Yarnell's name was frequently mentioned in articles about cattle mutilations. One of Yarnell's deputies had been interviewed by Linda Howe for "Strange Harvest" and had told of a UFO sighting he had made. The reported mutilations in Elbert County had been instrumental in drawing the CBI into the investigation, and it was in Elbert that the mutilations had begun to assume the dimensions of panic and public concern that had driven the incidents into the state's newspapers. It was primarily through the Elbert County incidents that Dorothy Aldridge of the Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph* became involved and had begun writing her early witchcraft- and UFO-slanted articles. If you were investigating cattle mutilations, you had to speak with Sheriff Yarnell.

We arrived at the courthouse around dusk. Yarnell looked to be in his mid-sixties, a big, beefy man who moved and spoke slowly. He had more seams in his weathered face than an Appalachian patchwork quilt. His deep, gravelly voice sounded like boulders grinding together at the bottom of a well. The sheriff was extremely patient and friendly.

He told us about the very first reported mutilation in Elbert County in 1975.

"A rancher found a dead calf. He thought it looked strange. He brought the calf to a vet. The vet was noncommittal about it. He didn't say it looked cut, and he didn't say it didn't. The rancher insisted it had been mutilated. That was the start of the whole thing here.

"It gathered momentum over a couple months after that. Reports here and there. The newspapers kept on top of it. Then reports started coming in from the other counties.

"There were a lot of reports that we didn't bother to classify as mutilations. You could tell they were predator damage. Finally, we held a meeting at the courthouse. Everyone wanted to know what was going on. The place was packed. After that it just kept going, and the CBI got involved. CSU confirmed a few of ours as having been cut with a knife."

Yarnell told us about one case in particular. This one had been mentioned in many of the articles about cattle mutilations, and had even been noted by Jacques Vallee in *Messengers of Deception*. Vallee and the other writers had claimed that the cow was found dead and mutilated, its udder left on its body but cleaned out of flesh, and then neatly packed with sand. Great symbolic significance was read into the story.

"I know the one you mean," said Yarnell. "We found it in a dry, sandy creek bed. You could see the tracks where the cow had dragged herself along the sand. There was a big circle cut out of the rear end. The hide of the udder was still there, but the flesh inside had been all cleaned out through the hole in the rear end. One of the teats was gone, cut off clean."

"What about the sand packed into the empty udder?" we asked.

"It wasn't that way," said Yarnell. "There was sand only along the inside of the bottom of the rear end wound. No one had packed the udder with sand."

Once again, we remarked, the news reports and rumors had been incorrect.

"But I'm pretty sure this one was a mutilation. I could see the knife strokes around the rear end wound."

There was not much to be done with his comment. There was no further support to it. It was an old case. Yarnell didn't seem to want to go into details. It certainly wasn't exactly what we would accept as a "confirmed" cattle mutilation. There was too little supporting evidence. Besides, we asked Yarnell if it would have been possible for predators, small ones like weasels, skunks, and the like, to have crawled in through the hole in the rear end and eaten the tissue inside the udder.

"Yes, I'm sure it's possible," he said. "They could have easily gone in the back and cleaned out the udder. But I'm sure I saw knife strokes around that rear end hole."

What about animals with broken legs or clamp marks, supposed proof of air-dropped carcasses?

"We had nothing like that. Not a one," he said.

And how about carcasses mysteriously drained of blood?

"We found blood in all of them. Never saw one that looked like it had been drained."

Yarnell went on to confirm that the area had been flooded with reports of helicopters during that period in 1975. "We don't see choppers around here like they were that year," he said.

What about UFOs, odd lights in the sky, flying saucers?

"We had none of those," he said. "Just helicopters."

We asked Yarnell to verify a story we had heard from several people. It was said that at the height of the panic in 1975, Yarnell had been skeptical of the findings coming out of the CBI lab and decided to test their accuracy. He went to a dead cow and, using his own knife, cut a chunk of hide from it. He then submitted the edges of the wound for analysis. He even went so far as to make it obvious. He cut little notches in it. After a few days, the lab returned its report on the knife-cut hide Yarnell had done himself. The lab said it was predator damage.

"Yeah, that's true," he chuckled. "I did that. After the report came back, I called the CBI lab and told the lab guy about it. He just brushed it off, said they were human too, could make mistakes."

Based on this story, we had heard many mutologoists simply dismiss *all* laboratory findings that pointed toward predator damage as the cause of wounds on reportedly mutilated carcasses. Yarnell had little more to offer.

"All that time, all the sheriffs were having regular meetings with each other," he said. "And we were talking to the newspapers. We wanted the public to know what we were doing."

And this, we remarked, well-intentioned though it was, had probably contributed in a large way to the number of mutilation reports by feeding public panic.

"I won't brush all this stuff under the table and pretend it didn't happen," Yarnell said. "We never did find out what happened. It's no shame not to solve a crime. That's all that happened here."

Generally, it seemed that, although Yarnell's name held a place of honor in the lore of cattle mutilations, and a few of the cases in his county were almost magical touchstones for the mutologists, the sheriff himself was simply not all that interested in cattle mutilation any more. And he certainly didn't think much of the idea of UFOs. We drove back to Denver.

Echoes From Nam

The next morning, we moved our base of operations south about seventy miles to Colorado Springs. From the Springs we would be making several days' worth of forays into the surrounding countryside, one into Lincoln County to see Leroy Yowell, the sheriff who had found the satchel with the scalpel in it, one to visit Bob Blake at his ranch near Simla to view the remains of his reportedly mutilated horse from last April, and one very important visit in the Springs itself, to George Erianne, the private investigator who had claimed to be sitting on some explosive inside knowledge about the mutilations and about the vanished *Brush Banner* editor, Dane Edwards.

Lincoln County had not had any reports of mutilated cattle until several months after the surrounding counties had been inundated with calls. Their first reports had begun about three months after those in Elbert and El Paso Counties. When we arrived at Sheriff Yowell's office in Hugo, he was ready and waiting for us.

"At the height of the thing we were getting calls for three or four reported mutilations every day. We were running for twenty hours a day. By the time it quieted down, we had received 133 reports of mutilated cattle," said Yowell.

Like every law officer we had spoken to so far (except Gabe Valdez), Sheriff Yowell quickly pointed out that almost all the reported mutilations had obviously been predator damage, misinterpreted by ranchers in the heat of the public panic.

"If you looked closely at most of them you could see toothmarks and crooked edges around the wounds, and there were always predator footprints around the carcasses," he said. "We freely eliminated those.

"We had only thirteen cases out of all those that were suspicious," he said.

Yowell referred to these thirteen cases as confirmed cases.

"How did you confirm that they were surgical damage and not predator damage that looked clean?" we asked him.

He reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a small, hand-held monocular magnifying scope. "We checked all of them through this," he explained. When the edges of the wounds looked smooth through the scope, the animal was classified as a confirmed mutilation. In most cases the examination had been made by the sheriff or one of his deputies. In a few cases, there had been informal examinations by local veterinarians who, as in Montana, had never submitted any detailed written reports on their findings.

Had any of the cases been confirmed by lab work at the CBI or Colorado State University laboratories?

"No. We sent samples to them, but they all came back with negative findings," he said.

In other words, despite the sheriff's honest attempt at using all the best means at his disposal in Lincoln County, *not one* of his "confirmed" mutilations had ever been so classified by a qualified veterinary pathologist. The judgments had been made by deputies and other lawmen, or by local vets who were not pathologists. We admired Yowell's attempt to deal with those cases in a professional manner, and we had no desire to fault his motives. But the truth was that none of his findings were worth very much.

"You'll find a discrepancy among the sheriffs in this state," he said. "A lot of them believe that the CBI was involved in a cover-up. I don't believe that."

He showed us a photograph of one of his "confirmed" mutilations. The animal had a large wound in its chest just under the foreleg.

"They removed only the heart from this one," he said. "Nothing else was touched."

As usual with photographs, it was impossible to tell anything definitive from the picture. But Yowell was convinced that the heart had been taken from the animal.

"Look," he said, "whoever did this needed some knowledge about anatomy, but nothing beyond what they could learn from a veterinary student, or a butcher, or a hunter. There was no extraordinary skill involved."

Yowell also pointed out that in none of the "confirmed" cases had he seen any unusual causes of death for the animals. Some of them had died from swallowing hardware, others from apparently natural causes.

But the surgical removal of this animal's heart had never been confirmed by a veterinary pathologist, so the conclusion was ultimately unreliable. Even if Yowell was right, and we were willing to grant the possibility of that, he did not place the apparent surgery on the level of a paranormal or superhuman feat.

"I don't put any stock in UFOs and extraterrestrials," he said. "I completely disagree with Tex Graves. You see a lot of wild things out here at night. So what? We had people calling in the morning star and the evening star as UFOs," he explained. He told a story to illustrate how completely the atmosphere of panic in 1975 had distorted everyone's sense of reality.

"We had two deputies who were out in the country one night during this thing. They were walking around in an area where there had been some reported mutilations. They were scared. They heard a noise. They were terrified. Suddenly, there was a noise close behind them. They pulled their guns and turned around, ready to shoot. It turned out that two curious horses had come up behind them in the dark, and one of them had whinnied." Yowell laughed. His point was clear. The rumors and sensationalistic newspaper coverage about UFOs and cults had really thrown a scare into people. Even the cops were prone to see and hear things that weren't there.

We asked him about cults. Yowell confirmed what Carl Whiteside had told us. There were plenty of cults in the Colorado Springs area, the CBI had infiltrated many of them, and no connection to the mutilations had ever been established.

"There were a lot of helicopter sightings reported, too," he explained. "We even chased a few in a plane, but never caught them. The airport tower confirmed one of them for us on their radio. It was a helicopter. We saw the lights. The pilot would leave them off until he got about two or three miles away from us, and then turn them on again, and turn them off when we got close. The copter landed somewhere along the line, and we never did catch him."

Again, no connection had been made between these helicopters and cattle mutilations. And none of the helicopters had been so-called mystery choppers. They had all displayed the lighting and behavior of normal, earthly helicopters.

"There were a lot of angry people around here at that time. Someone took a couple of shots at a public utility chopper once, and one rancher who had bought a helicopter didn't bring it home to the county for a whole year because of the panic. He didn't want anyone to shoot him down by mistake."

Ultimately, Yowell felt that the military, particularly helicopter pilots from the army base at Fort Carson, had been responsible for the few mutilations he believed he had confirmed. But Yowell had no Byzantine notions about a large-scale government conspiracy or any sort of secret CB warfare testing program. His ideas were more mundane.

"Toward the end, I had a strong feeling that the military was involved in it," he said. "No secret operations or anything like that. Look at the timing of the mutilation reports. They started in the spring and summer of 1975, right after we closed out Saigon and ended the war and brought all those combat helicopter pilots back home. I'm sure a lot of those guys came through bases in Colorado, particularly Fort Carson. I think it's possible that some of those hotshot combat pilots were bored after all the action they had over there. I think maybe they were sitting around with nothing to do, and these mutilation reports started coming in. And I think it's possible some bright boy got the idea that they could play a little war game, you know, secret night operations against the local ranchers and sheriffs, and that some of them started using their combat skills to hop around the pastures killing cattle and cutting parts off them, just for a lark and to feed their need for action. It was a high-risk thing, breaking the law, and all the lawmen in the eastern part of the state were on the case, which would just make it more interesting. I can even see where there could have been a competitive element in there, you know, pilots competing with each other to see who could nail the most cattle without getting caught—'I got more cow assholes than you did,' that sort of thing.

"They'd have access to everything they needed. They could recruit a corpsman here and there to fly out with them. He'd know how to do the cutting, and he could get drugs to take the animals down. And the whole idea would be to push it as far as you could, keep doing it and doing it, even while the investigations were going on. That would be part of the risk, part of the fun. Along the way, they'd have some laughs over the sheriffs' confusion and the public panic and the UFO stories. We'd be their enemy, and the game would be to outmaneuver the police patrols and the ranchers.

"The timing was right, too. You figure if a bunch of those boys were transferred from combat to here and they were doing that, the business would last as long as it took the Army to retransfer everyone to different bases around the country, then the game would stop. That might coincide with the end of things down here in early 1976."

Now *this* was some very creative thinking. We told the sheriff we were very impressed. We asked him how he had gotten the idea.

"Well, in the past, whenever we needed some help or cooperation from the Army at Fort Carson, they were always very good about it. When we asked them for help on this mutilation thing, to check their pilots and things like that, they suddenly became very uncooperative. We couldn't understand that. It was almost like they were hiding something.

"Oh, I don't think the Army was running any secret operation," he said. "I think they were embarrassed. I think they might have known that some of their boys were out here playing around killing cows, and couldn't get them to stop. And I think they were uncooperative because they wanted to keep the public from learning that they couldn't control their own copter jockeys and keep them from playing games. It's bad for their image. So I think the brass maybe covered it up, played dumb and didn't help us as much as they could. And maybe after a while the chopper pilots either got transferred or else got the point and quit. I think the only cover-up that might have been going on was the Army brass trying to avoid looking foolish to the civilians."

It was a truly elegant reading of the situation. Of course, it would be extremely difficult to prove that it had happened. The Army certainly would not help, and the chopper pilots who might have been involved would not admit it. And it was from this story that Yowell began talking about the blue satchel with the cow parts and scalpel in it.

"It was found right in the driveway of the home of a big rancher around here. It was five feet from the mailbox. Since it was right near a road, we could never tell if it might have fallen out of a passing car, or maybe out of a helicopter, if some of those Army boys were playing their game and happened to fly over and drop it by accident. The problem was that we couldn't correlate the thing with anything. The parts didn't match any animals ever reported.

"The plastic valise was blue, government issue, and so a lot of people right away started blaming the military, but those cheap plastic valises are all over the place. There's lots of Army and Air Force action in this state, and there are thousands of those things floating around. They issue those satchels by the truckload. Anyone can have one. You don't have to be in the military. That was no real lead.

"We sent it up to the CBI. They dusted it for prints. Nothing. They did some tests and found that the blood on the scalpel was blood, but that was it. They could never determine the species, whether it was from a cow, a human or what. And the parts, the ear and the piece of the tongue, were definitely bovine.

"We tried everything," he continued. "We even took it to a psychic in Colorado Springs. Zero. Nothing."

He flipped through his file and handed us a copy of a report from the CBI criminology lab. It said exactly what Yowell had just told us. No prints on the scalpel or the valise, no species identification on the blood. He also showed us a photo of the satchel. It was one of those cheap, blue plastic envelopes, the size of a legal pad, with a plastic zipper running across the top. Next to it on a sheet of cardboard were the scalpel, the soiled plastic artificial insemination gloves, and the sloppy lumps of flesh that were the cow's ear and part of its tongue. Looking at the photograph, we felt a deep tremor of frustration. Such an excellent clue, and it proved to be worthless.

We asked Yowell what had happened to the valise and its contents.

"Beats me," he said. "It got lost in the shuffle. I don't even know anymore if we ended up with it or the CBI did. It just disappeared. Someone probably threw it away after the investigation was closed.

"The only kind of correlation with it, and this was no real correlation at all, was that the rancher whose driveway the thing was found in had reported one of his animals mutilated a month before. It was the first reported mutilation in Lincoln County. And that wasn't very helpful. You had three or four mutilation reports every day—the whole county was reporting them—so it's hard to see that as some kind of unusual connection."

We left Yowell and headed back toward Colorado Springs, toward Simla, to visit Bob Blake and have our first look at an actual reportedly mutilated animal, the carcass of his horse, Skip Easy Cash, which had been found dead three and a half months before.

The Hollow Horse

The Blake ranch was about an hour from the town of Hugo. On our way there we prepared ourselves for the encounter with Mr. Blake. The case of his reportedly mutilated horse had come to us first via word of mouth from his two neighbors: Bob Rondell, the man from the *O.S.M.A. Beacon* who talked about ghosts, believed the CIA might be after him, and claimed that two Men In Black whom he believed to be extraterrestrials had come to take away his photograph of a UFO; and from retired Air Force Colonel Bud Jenkins, who had given us a crisp account of the incident over the phone. The Blake case had also taken some further developments in the ensuing three months.

First, it had been snatched by Linda Howe as the capstone scene to "Strange Harvest." Not only had she sped to the Blake ranch to interview him and his wife, but she had initiated her Linda Howe-style "investigation," which entailed inspecting the animal herself, releasing many comments about its weird state to the local press, and bringing in some others to assist her. She had brought Richard Sigismund, the UFO buff from Boulder, to conduct the "scientific" part of the investigation. Sigismund was neither a nuclear physicist, a technician, nor an instrumentation specialist, but a former professor of astronomy at Northwestern University. Nonetheless, he had taken Geiger counter readings of the animal and the site. He and Howe had also done their black light experiment and found the supposedly mysterious fluorescent patch on the horse's face. They had vigorously proclaimed both in her film and to the newspapers the supremely surgical precision of the wounds on the horse, the large willow tree which had been found broken a few feet from the horse, and several other aspects of the case.

The developments in the case had been diligently covered by none other than Dorothy Aldridge of the Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph,* the third pillar of the Linda Howe-Gail Olson-Dorothy Aldridge triumvirate of mutilation scare journalists. Aldridge had more than equaled her journalistic efforts in the 1975 Colorado wave. Her articles bore progressively more "objective" headlines from the moment the horse's mutilation was first reported through Linda Howe's visit to film the dead carcass: "Pair Says Horse Killers Used Helicopter"; "Owner Claims Horse Embalmed, Then Mutilated"; "Mutilated Horse's Skin Glows Under Black Light!"

Aldridge's coverage offered more than just the simple facts of the case. These, as far as we could determine, were that Blake's wife had seen the horse alive and well on April 21, and had discovered it dead three days later, lying just inside a grove of trees in one of their pastures about a mile from their house. The animal had been lying on its left side, missing its right (up side) ear and its anus, scrotum, the right (up) side of its lower lip, and the muscle tissue around its right (up side) eye. The Blakes had called the El Paso County Sheriff's Office, which sent two deputies and a detective to examine the horse and take photographs of it. Probably because all the damage was consistent with predator damage (among other things, only the upward side eye, ear, lip were torn or disturbed), the deputies had officially concluded that the horse had died of some unknown natural cause and had been torn by predators. Even Dorothy Aldridge had quoted from the deputy's report in her first article:

" 'The skin surrounding the missing parts appeared to be torn from the body rather than cut. Edges of the outlying skin appeared to have been chewed, i.e., jagged edges. It appeared as though the wall of the intestine had been pulled out of the anus.' " This was the official determination of the case, based on the at least partially trained observations of the deputy.

There was also a large willow near the carcass which looked to have been recently knocked down, twisted, and broken a few feet above its base. Blake had also brought this tree to the attention of the investigating deputies. According to Aldridge's first article about the incident, the deputy's official report referred to this tree and noted that the deputies had observed many recently downed trees in the area, which had obviously been broken by recent heavy weather, rain and high winds. Apparently, there had been such a storm between the day the horse was last seen alive and the day it was found. The deputy's report was quoted by Aldridge as saying that Blake agreed that the tree had probably been knocked down by lightning.

In Aldridge's first article, these references to the deputy's official findings were bracketed, and for the most part overshadowed, by the main thrust of the piece. This was despite the deputy's findings and despite the fact that the weather accounted for not only the tree but the dead horse as well (since the horse was lying just inside a stand of trees in the middle of an open field, and the broken tree was less than six feet from the carcass, it was most probable that the animal had been killed by the same bolt of lightning that had broken the tree). The Blakes believed that someone had come to the pasture in a helicopter and killed the horse with drugs, then mutilated him. In other words, despite some clear-cut evidence for natural causes, the Blakes were saying it was a classic mutilation which fit the model of helicopter-borne conspirators. In fact, Mrs. Blake was quoted as saying she believed the horse had been the victim of a "big organization" that had taken his parts to use in its rituals.

This belief was apparently based on several factors. First, the Blakes had been awakened at about 3:30 A.M. on the night of the twenty-third of April by what sounded like a large semi-trailer truck gearing down to cross the cattle guards on the gravel road that passes a hundred yards or so from the driveway of their house. There was nothing unusual in this, since it could have been the large feed truck that supplied their ranch. These trucks arrive at all hours of the day or night to dump their loads of animal food on the customers' land. Bob Blake had gone outside to check and had not seen the truck or anything else. About an hour later, they heard the sound of the gearing-down truck again, passing by and moving away from their driveway. The next day, no feed had been delivered, so Blake was positive that the sound had not been the truck with his feed delivery. However, the Blakes were telling Aldridge that they believed that the truck engine sound was really the sound of the mysterious helicopter which had murdered and mutilated their horse because they estimated that the horse had died on the night of the twenty-third. No examination was ever made by a veterinarian or pathologist to determine the approximate day of the animal's death, so this connection was complete speculation.

Also, the pasture in which the horse had been found was over a mile from the house, much too great a distance for the sound of this supposed helicopter to have carried loudly into the Blakes' home. In Aldridge's article they explained that they believed that their CB antenna had somehow picked up and conducted the sound of this mile-away helicopter into the house, and that the truck engine sound they had heard was not in reality a large truck going by their gate. At no time, however, was any attempt made

to explain through what type of mechanical and electromagnetic means a CB antenna, connected to a radio that was shut off, could pick up a sound a mile away. The Blakes' claim was completely at odds with the way radio transmissions work. No radio antenna can take a sound in the air, amplify it, and translate it into a louder and different sound somewhere else. This impossibility did not seem to bother either the Blakes or Ms. Aldridge. In addition, no one had seen or heard any helicopters in the vicinity. And a helicopter does not sound like a semi shifting gears.

The second element that made the Blakes believe that their horse had been mutilated by chopper-flying desperadoes was the discovery of two small wounds on the flank of the underside of the downed horse. Blake and the reporter had described them as "strange" puncture wounds and had concluded, again without the benefit of a veterinarian or veterinary pathologist, that they were wounds from tranquilizer darts fired at the horse by the mutilators. In her first article, Aldridge had noted that the investigating deputy also saw these marks, and described them as being of no specific shape and as having likely been made by the horse falling on a twig or branch when it went down. When the deputy had asked Blake if he intended to have a necropsy done on the horse by a qualified vet or pathologist to try to determine the possible cause of these marks and of the cuts on the animal, he told her no. So his layman's conclusion about the marks being from darts was completely uninformed and was made without the benefit of a reliable expert of any kind. In other words, it was essentially worthless.

The third element was the horse's apparent hardiness. Mrs. Blake was quoted by Aldridge as saying that the horse had survived all the blizzards, that he had never been sick in his life. Somehow, Mrs. Blake believed that because the horse had never been sick it was somehow impossible for him *ever* to be sick or to die. Neither the Blakes nor Aldridge seemed to place any value on the fact that the horse was seventeen years old. The average lifespan of a healthy, well-maintained horse is about twenty-two years. So the Blake horse was old, and more subject to sickness and death than a young one.

Still, the story might have run out of steam right there, but then another force took over, and that force was the vestiges of the distorting and irrational mutilation *phenomenon* still hanging around Colorado ever since the 1975 wave. Not only had

Aldridge seized on the incident and begun to cast it as another great mystery, but Linda Howe had gotten into the act as she had gradually transformed herself into the cattle mutilation ombudsman for any Colorado ranchers who believed that their animals had been mutilated. She was gathering material for her film, which was due to air four weeks after the Blake horse had been found. Howe suddenly and conveniently began logging cattle mutilation reports in eastern Colorado just before her film was to air. There were about four, three of them horses, including the Blake animal. Howe, of course, "investigated" these without the help of a qualified veterinarian or pathologist, and at no time tried to have a diagnostic laboratory assess the condition of the animals. She simply collected all the claims of bizarreness and mystery and then went after as much publicity as she could get.

Other mutologists had also heard about the incident and contacted the Blakes, who by now were becoming subject to the usual bombardment of UFO and conspiracy theories about the mutilations. Apparently, they had a tendency to accept these ideas regarding their own animal. And still no veterinarian, pathologist, or diagnostic laboratory had looked at the horse to bear up the claims of strangeness.

About two weeks after the animal died, Dorothy Aldridge wrote another article about it, this one entitled "Owner Claims Horse Embalmed, Then Mutilated." Blake now felt that his horse had been literally embalmed, since it did not seem to be bloating and decomposing in the way he had seen other dead animals decompose. At no time did Blake or anyone else attempt to have a tissue sample analyzed to ascertain if anyone had injected embalming fluid or any other chemicals into the horse.

Aldridge also quoted Blake as being mystified that no predators had touched the carcass since the initial damage was done, thereby fitting it into the mutology theory that predators avoid mutilated animals. Neither Blake nor Aldridge had bothered to consider that a few days after it died the horse had been touched, moved, and surrounded by half a dozen humans who had left man-scent all over the carcass and its surrounding area, and that this was the most likely reason the predators had never returned to the horse.

The other element in the argument that the horse had been mysteriously embalmed was that Blake had taken notice of the carcass of a cow that had died while calving about the time the horse died. The cow carcass, according to Blake, stank and had decomposed severely in comparison to the horse. It was on this basis that Blake had concluded that the horse was embalmed. Neither he nor Aldridge ever tried to ascertain what natural differences might have existed between the two carcasses to account for their different rates of decomposition. Aldridge simply took Blake's claim and splashed it across four columns of the *Gazette-Telegraph*.

In another two weeks or so, the case had entered another stage of mutologist inflation. Linda Howe had come down to film the animal for the concluding segment of her movie, and had brought Dr. Richard Sigismund with her to conduct an "expert" analysis of the carcass. His expert credentials were that he was an official field investigator for Dr. J. Allen Hyneck's Center for UFO Studies in Illinois. The article then went on to quote Howe at length, discoursing about the nature of mutilated cattle and how she felt "eerie" standing next to the Blake horse a month after it was found dead: obvious, incontrovertible scientific proof.

Howe was also quoted as describing a tree next to the fallen willow as being charred over part of its trunk. Aldridge presented this revelation as Howe had delivered it, as if the charring were some bizarre manifestation, possibly the result of some powerful and sophisticated hardware, maybe the laser death ray from a UFO.

Several days later, Dorothy Aldridge wrote a feature article, complete with pictures, for the *Gazette-Telegraph* about the local visit of the illustrious film producer Linda Howe, and her revealing scientific film in progress about the cattle mutilations.

Through all this coverage and progressive emphasis on supposedly strange but never supported aspects of the case, the simplicity of the deputy's official findings faded into the background. In fact, they were never mentioned. When the information had to be dealt with, Carl Whiteside's no-win hypothesis began to operate. Since neither Blake, nor Howe, nor Aldridge could effectively refute the deputy's findings with any real evidence, they invoked the logic of the cover-up. The Big Lie began to operate with a vengeance.

"I feel that some big organization is doing the mutilations using helicopters," Blake was quoted as saying in one of Aldridge's articles. "I also feel the law's running scared and doesn't want to get mixed up in it."

As we entered the winding drive to the Blake homestead, we had the sudden feeling we were coming upon the beached remnants of a broken-up Noah's Ark. The Blakes, it turned out, were not exclusively cattle ranchers. They appeared to raise every animal under the sun. There was a pen full of sheep across the drive from the house. As we parked we saw what looked like fifteen dogs capering and barking in the fenced-in front yard. Next to the house was a long, low structure, seemingly filled to the beams with rabbits.

Blake, his wife, and his son and young daughter came out of the house to greet us. We got out of the car, and they waded toward us through the sea of dogs in the yard, a few of which were pedigreed greyhounds. A loud barking and yowling suddenly let loose not from the dogs in the yard, but from a small outbuilding about fifty feet from the house. Several cats swam through the yard amid the dog tide that was parting in front of the Blake family.

We shook hands all around.

The other dogs, some mutts and some greyhounds, milled around our legs. The cats, and several kittens, pounced and stalked and circled.

They led us into the house. By this time the platoon of dogs had all lain down in a heap, a carpet of dogs on the front porch. In order to get into the house we had to step through them. There was not a single growl, bark, or yelp. None of them even pulled a paw out of our way.

Inside, we were introduced to a sunburned, vigorous and prosperous-looking man with receding, silvery hair. This was retired Air Force Colonel Bud Jenkins, the neighbor of the Blakes who had telephoned us in New York a few months ago. We all sat at the long kitchen table.

Bob Blake was a tall, lanky man in blue jeans, a Western shirt, and a straw cowboy hat which, in the manner of most working ranchers and farmers, he did not remove when we were inside the house. When he lifted his hat to adjust it or scratch his head, we saw that his deep suntan ended in a perfectly straight line of white, untanned skin exactly where the margin of his hatband began. Mrs. Blake was a small, athletic-looking woman with long reddish-blonde hair and a complement of biceps, triceps, and other muscles that looked like those of a small man. She was obviously a working ranch woman who did the same kind of heavy labor as her husband.

Bob Blake had an easygoing, light manner, and he was given to making jokes and funny asides. His wife had a visible sense of humor too, but she also had a sassy, sarcastic attitude that sometimes bordered on belligerence.

The Blakes recapitulated the story of the dead horse, essentially the same one told in Aldridge's articles. The horse had not been checked or seen for three days before it was found. Both the last sighting of the live horse and its discovery had been made by Mrs. Blake.

"Was there a storm in between the time you last saw the horse and the time you found it dead?" we asked her.

"No. Absolutely not. No, it didn't rain," she said. Her eyes flashed a challenge. She had certainly added a good deal of emphasis to her answer, almost as if she had expected to be asked that. And well she might have, we thought, since not only had the sheriff's deputies said this, but Colonel Jenkins himself had specifically told us that at the time the horse was assumed to have died there was at least one thunderstorm over the Blake property. And we were aware that, given the broken tree and the nearness of the horse to the tree, the most likely explanation of the horse's death was a lightning strike. We had the distinct feeling that Mrs. Blake knew quite well that a lightning flash, and not a crew of airborne cattle mutilators, was the most reasonable explanation. And we sensed that she was prepared to become extremely unpleasant if we sought to challenge, even in the gentlest way, her insistence that the animal had been willfully killed by the occupants of a mysterious helicopter.

It was not that we thought she or Blake were lying per se, but rather that they were, on some level, aware that their story was full of holes and that they were being coached, coddled, and provoked in it by people like Dorothy Aldridge and Linda Howe.

Blake talked about the two puncture wounds on the horse's flank. He never hesitated to call them "dart holes," even though no one knew for sure what they were. We asked him why he had not had a veterinarian out to look at the animal.

"I think the sheriff's department has got to the vets to make them clam up," he said. He was still applying his conspiracy reading to the situation: the sheriff's department was part of the cover-up, and now was putting pressure on local veterinarians to clam up about mutilations. Blake did not seem to be aware that his never *asking* a veterinarian to come out might have been the reason none had come to see the dead horse.

"There was a dried blood spot on the horse's nose. I think they wiped their scalpel blade there after they were done," he said.

Yet no one had ever tested the spot to see if it was indeed blood, let alone whether or not its shape indicated that a blade had been wiped there.

Blake then mentioned that he had seen five helicopters flying across the pasture where the horse had been found.

"When did you see the helicopters?" we asked him.

"About four weeks after the horse died," he replied. "They were Air Force choppers going east from the bases west of here." Where was the supposed connection with the dead animal? It seemed there was none.

We asked Blake about another element that had been included in the story by Linda Howe and by Bob Rondell. Apparently, some time after the horse had been found, a few of Blake's sheep had come down with eye trouble. Their eyes had become glazed with a bluish film. This was mentioned by Linda Howe, for one, as some new manifestation of bizarreness, some terribly otherworldly clue, possibly indicative of the effects of some extraterrestrial influence, or else some governmental germ warfare experiment.

"What happened to the sheep?" we asked him.

"Oh, three or four days later they were all better. Whatever it was went away after I used some pink eye medicine on them."

We again asked Mrs. Blake to tell us what had happened. This time she added an interesting detail to her story.

She told of going out and finding the horse.

"I knew what happened to that horse the second I looked at it," she said.

"What do you mean?" we asked.

"Because I knew what was going on," she said. "I heard all about cattle mutilations. And I knew these things were happening. So as soon as I saw the horse I knew it was mutilated."

At last, we realized, we had finally encountered what was possibly the very core of so many of the ranchers' mistaken claims of cattle mutilations. Here was the person who found the dead animal, the very first witness, stating unequivocally that she *did not even need to examine the horse closely to determine it was a mutilation,* precisely because her consciousness had already been primed, distorted, and affected by the cattle mutilation myth and the mutilation phenomenon, the press coverage, rumors, and its mass psychological effects. *She saw a mute because she believed, before she ever saw one, that cattle mutilations were the work of someone sinister, someone who used helicopters.* The press distortions and media hysteria of 1975 had done their work on Mrs. Blake's perceptions. She was a mutilation witness waiting to happen.

She had, she said, come back to the house and told her husband Bob. He had gone out to look at the horse, and agreed with her. They had called the sheriff. And by the time the deputies were ready to point out their findings of obviously jagged wounds and a tree (and probably a horse) obviously swept down by a bolt of lightning, it was too late. Mrs. Blake, and her husband, and the mutologists who began to gather around them like flies around strawberry jam, began to bend, deny, and distort all indications from the real world that might say that maybe they had not seen a mutilation after all.

We did not think that the Blakes were lying. They were just in the grip of a kind of delusion, fed by the media and by media people who courted them, interviewed them, and filled their heads with the same images of choppers and government agents that had overtaken Colorado and other states during mutilation waves. We all see what we've been programmed to see, often what's not really there.

Also contributing to the conversation was Colonel Jenkins, the kind of witness Tom Adams would have enshrined on a pedestal. "Ex-Air Force officer maintains that mutilators use helicopters. . . ." We could just see it.

Jenkins, like the Blakes, was extremely friendly. The colonel was much disposed toward the idea that cattle mutilations were the work of the military. He told us that combat chopper pilots could perform all the close-to-the-ground hop, skip, and jump maneuvers necessary to muffle a helicopter's sound and take it secretly into and out of rolling pastures in the area. He spoke of his combat experience in Viet Nam, where he had been a transport pilot and flown large planes, including the C-47 "Puff The Magic Dragon" gunships. He told us about the immensely bright combat lights that had been developed for night fighting in Viet Nam. These, he said, were huge braces of spotlights that were mounted in frames on the bellies of large aircraft. The units generated the blinding light given off by the huge lighting towers at sports stadiums. The planes would circle above the battle zone, just out of the range of rifle and machine gun bullets, while these brilliant batteries of light illuminated the field below.

These lighting units, he said, generated an unbelievable amount of heat. He felt that the scorched upper branches of the tree next to the fallen willow over the dead horse might have been burned by a light like this slung under a helicopter.

"It's definitely night maneuvers out of Fort Carson, Butts Field," he said.

But he could give no further reason why he believed this, no supporting proof.

"I think if someone dropped a bomb on the White House it would finish cattle mutilations for good," Blake said. His distaste for government and his consequent paranoia were not difficult to see. It was easy to see how he could quickly come to believe that cattle mutilations were a government conspiracy.

Blake returned to what was the single most important anchor for the notion that there was something strange about the horse's death: its supposed failure not only to bloat but to decompose normally.

"It was five weeks before any maggots, flies, or birds ever touched it," he said. "It didn't bloat. Still hasn't. The dogs won't go near it. It's like it's embalmed."

We all piled into Blake's and the colonel's trucks and set out for the horse's carcass.

The pasture where it lay was bordered by a gravel road. The land sloped downward about a quarter-mile to the grove of trees in which the carcass lay. The grove of trees stood out like several others in the wide pastures, as little raised oases in the flat expanse of the meadows. They were all perfect lightning targets in a thunderstorm.

We bumped over the road to the small copse of trees. Behind it was the watering hole where Blake's cattle came to drink.

On foot, we approached the stand of trees. We could see the one willow that had been bent and broken down. And, since we were downwind from the horse, we smelled its decaying stink fifty yards before we reached it. For a carcass that had magically refused to rot, this one smelled like death itself. This did not exactly make us think of an embalmed animal.

It certainly had decomposed; it had not been magically preserved in any way. All that was left of it, in fact, was the hide and the bones, with very little flesh between them. The only thing that might have been unusual about it was that the belly hide was intact. It was not torn open and ripped away in patches to reveal ribs and its empty abdomen, like most of the predator-damaged animals we had seen pictures of. Still, this was no cause for bizarre formulations. Dr. King at Cornell had told us quite specifically that it is *not* unusual for a dead animal, particularly a horse, not to bloat noticeably after death. A horse's hide is extremely tough and inelastic, and sometimes will not expand even under the internal pressure of decay.

The horse itself was hollow. Its insides were completely gone, deteriorated by decomposition and eaten by the maggots, flies, and ants that were swarming over it now in droves. There was a hole in its hide over its hipbone where the pelvic bone had poked through. The legs looked distinctly gnawed in spots, their flesh gone and the bones gleaming.

Blake led us around the carcass, pointing out the damage to the rear end, the ear, the eye, and the lip. It was now, of course, impossible to tell anything about these wounds with the naked eye. Everything was too far gone. But the point was this: the carcass was rotting peacefully and normally, and stinking to high heaven, just as it was supposed to. It was not embalmed. It was not preserved. There was nothing unusual about it. The only witnesses to this supposed miraculous preservation were Blake and his wife, and, frankly, we did not trust their judgment very much, nor their reliability as observers.

As we all turned from the horse and examined the fallen tree, Blake kept insisting that the tree had fallen down because the mutilators had landed their helicopter on top of it. We kept looking to Colonel Jenkins for some clarification on this. The man knew about aircraft. Finally, reluctantly and almost under his breath, he said, "No, it couldn't do that. A chopper's blades would be shattered by those trees. You couldn't get that close." The comment seemed to have no effect on Blake, who preferred to believe, against all physical and aeronautical plausibility, that someone had brought a helicopter into those trees.

Blake and the colonel pointed out the top of the tree next to the fallen willow, the tree that supposedly had been burned in some way. There was no obvious charring at all. The leaves of the topmost quarter of the tree were a sickly yellow while all the rest of the leaves were a rich green, and both Blake and the colonel said that this was the result of the burn and heat damage. We didn't see any reason to doubt this. It was obvious that something had happened to the top of the tree. And if the horse and the willow had been dropped by a bolt of lightning, there was no reason why it had not also sparked the top of this slightly damaged tree.

We inspected the broken trunk of the downed willow tree. The break, about four feet above the ground, was violent and clean. The stout trunk, about a foot in diameter, had been bent and cracked at a right angle, just like a twig. The top of the tree lay along the ground.

We looked for burn marks on the trunk at the point of the break but could find none. This did not mean anything, however. If the tree was struck by lightning it might explode, as many trees do, and it might also not. It was still likely that, given the storm while the horse had not been seen, and given the nearness of the horse to the downed tree, they had both been leveled by lightning.

Most significant about the case was that through it we were finally seeing firsthand the exact mechanism whereby uninformed and incompetent mutologists and reporters entered a situation where the preponderance of available evidence suggested normal, natural explanations, and then worked their alchemy of hysteria, publicity-mongering, and their own great need to create bizarre mysteries where there simply were none to create so-called cattle mutilations.

This case would evolve over the next ten months or so into one of the landmark cases in the field of mutology. Through Linda Howe's pushing it as mysterious, it would grow into a major issue, a classic case of weirdness with all kinds of intimations of mystery choppers and conspiracies. Ultimately, Tom Adams would write it up at length in a 1981 *Stigmata* as one of the major events of the so-called silent siege. Within months, all inklings about the deputies' predator findings would disappear, all questions of the plausibility of Blake's claims would be bypassed, and the claims of strangeness would overwhelm the case. Truth simply would not matter.

Deep Cover

The next afternoon, we went to the home of George Erianne in Colorado Springs. We didn't really know what to expect from this visit. Erianne was a working, licensed private investigator who had been in that business for many years. Like many men in that field, Erianne had a flair for melodrama, for presenting himself as a swashbuckling mystery man, a knower of secrets, a hotshot fancy hired gun who, on call and for fat fees, would follow a wayward husband in a divorce case, crack a security fraud, or aid a needy police department in solving a baffling murder. He was known by and connected with the police in Colorado Springs and with law enforcement people in other parts of the country. We had been directed to him by Dave Marash, an experienced professional journalist, now an anchorman for NBC-TV news out of New York. Marash is no fool. Before he interviewed Erianne for the never-broadcast ABC "20/20" segment his crew filmed in 1978, he had thoroughly checked out his credentials.

Erianne was the kind of man who tried to make you think he knew a great deal more than he did. This is an old investigation technique used by cops, private eyes, and journalists alike. He also had another attribute common to many people who make their living through surreptitious maneuvering and deceit: he constantly went out of his way to impress his audience with the weight of his background in high-level, top-security intelligence work. Like so many private investigators, he was constantly referring to highly sensitive government and security work he had been involved in. Professional secret investigators, such as FBI agents, have a name for private eyes like him: they call them "wish-they-weres," meaning that they always wished they had been or could be actual CIA operatives or spies, and so incorporated this kind of image-enhancing verbal dance into their depictions of themselves.

Erianne had become involved with the cattle mutilations in May of 1975. In October and November of 1975, he was contacted by the mysteriously distraught, peripatetic, and finally missing editor of the *Brush Banner,* Dane Edwards. He had apparently contacted Erianne to enlist his help, since Erianne was known in Colorado as a supposed ex-intelligence services officer who was critical of government spy agency policies.

According to Dave Marash, Erianne had actually harbored Edwards during his flight from Colorado in the late fall of 1975, while Edwards was claiming to be hounded by secret agents because he knew the answer to the cattle mutilation mystery. Marash had told us that Erianne had gotten Edwards to dictate onto tape cassettes the contents of a book he had begun writing in which Edwards supposedly revealed his secrets. We wanted to find out more about this.

Erianne, a local celebrity who was always good for an occasional feature story in the local newspapers, had been launched into the public view as a commentator on the cattle mutilations in an article by Dorothy Aldridge in the *Gazette-Telegraph* in January of 1976. In the article, Erianne was extensively quoted as saying he was positive that the Colorado mutilations were committed by a "large, substantially funded, highly skilled, contrived organization which disregards the feelings of others for its own benefit." He claimed to have amassed evidence pointing to a group of "well organized, intelligent, selected humans who have excellent communications and training for specific participation in the [cattle] deaths and mutilations."*

The article covered his insistence that the state do something to support a "no-holds-barred" investigation based on a centrally organized and directed system of information-sharing among all the county sheriffs' offices in the state, the CBI, and the FBI in Colorado. He called the CBI's findings "inaccurate." He implied that he had evidence to indicate that some people, likely connected to the cattle mutilations, had been tailing investigators and tapping phone lines. He made repeated references to his masses of evidence.

Unfortunately, in true private eye fashion, he never discussed or revealed the nature of any of his evidence, never gave a single inkling of its source for reliability. The entire impact of the article came from Aldridge's acceptance of Erianne's local reputation and her assumption that anything he said must be true. Apparently, she never entertained the possibility that George was getting a hell of a lot of free publicity for his business by telling her all those things.

Erianne said in the article that he could not and would not name either the organization he said he knew was responsible for the mutilations or his sources for evidence until the state pulled together the kind of task force he had suggested. Aldridge never bothered to ask why, if he had so much good information, he never offered it to the CBI to help them crack the case and collect the reward money.

After this coverage had made him an established commentator on the Colorado mutilations, Erianne was interviewed by Ed Sanders for two long articles that appeared in *Oui* in late 1976. Apparently, Erianne spoke more freely to Sanders than he had to Aldridge. He told Sanders that he believed the mutilations were part of a secret experiment being conducted by "rogue researchers" who had come out of the military's CB warfare programs before the programs were shut down. He told Sanders that in 1961, when he was working for the Office of the Secretary of Defense in Washington, D.C., there had been a meeting at Bethesda Naval Hospital regarding some sort of bacteriological warfare. Erianne claimed that this meeting was to begin the activation of a program to develop bacteriological agents that would be lethal to only a specific racial group, Orientals. This would tie into the U.S.'s escalating military involvement in Southeast Asia at that time. Sanders went on to postulate that perhaps this anti-Oriental toxin had been developed, and that when CB warfare experiments were outlawed in 1970 after the 1968 Dugway Proving Grounds sheep kill, a small band of government CBW experimenters had somehow obtained clandestine government funding to continue their racist CB experiments. Sanders further postulated that it was perhaps this group which was responsible for the cattle mutilations, still trying to perfect their racially specific germ weapons. To support this he quoted some rumors we had also heard from the mutology network, that the mucous membranes of the cow were in some way chemically similar to those of Orientals, thus making these animals the best test subjects and thereby accounting for cattle mutilations. Neither Sanders nor the mutologists were ever able to offer any scientific support for this notion of similarity between cow and human tissues.*

But Erianne had never revealed to Sanders the source of the information behind his claim or the reliability of his information, claiming, in typical cloak-and-dagger style, that his sensitive high-level government contacts could not be trifled with.

Erianne's neat home was in one of the residential neighborhoods of Colorado Springs, on a street like any well-manicured middle-class suburban street: clipped lawns, shaped shrubbery, medium-sized tract-type housing.

He was slightly paunchy, with heavy features and perfectly styled, medium-length, graying, blow-dried hair, and looked like a nondescript successful businessman in his early fifties. Wel-

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*Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph*, "Evidence Points to Mutilators," January 22, 1976.

**Oui*, September, 1976, "The Mutilation Mystery," Ed Sanders.

coming us into his living room, he introduced two other guests. One of them, an extremely wiry, thin, hatchet-faced man about forty, was Joe Burns, an associate of Erianne's. They handed us their business cards. Erianne's card, in good, flamboyant public relations style, proclaimed him as "The Detective." Burns's card, printed in exactly the same typeface, ink, and design, proclaimed him to be "The Investigator." The third man, who did not share the same overly stylish air of Erianne and Burns, introduced himself as Kurt Peters.

"That's Kurt with a K," he said.

Kurt Peters was short and bulky and had receding, kinky black hair, wire-framed glasses, a droopy moustache and long sideburns. Sucking a pipe, he looked more like a writer or college professor than like anyone connected with the private investigation field. When we asked who he was, he replied that he was "a researcher" who sometimes did work on Erianne's cases. Erianne ushered us through the sunny, suburban kitchen and down into his basement den.

As we passed through the kitchen we did not miss the square black bulk of a holstered automatic pistol sitting casually on the counter.

This guy, we realized, plays the role to the hilt.

The basement den, too, was dramatically decorated. It looked like a movie set from a CIA thriller. Carpeted and comfortably furnished with couch, chairs, and tables, it had pine-paneled walls hung with memorabilia. A large glass case behind the chair in which Erianne chose to sit was filled with a display of various types of handguns.

On the adjoining wall was a row of glass cases full of framed letters, old I.D. cards, a display of strange-shaped keys, old photographs, and official documents. In one of them was an identification card claiming that Erianne had been a security operative for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The keys, he told us, were duplicates of the house keys of Russian secret agents in West Berlin, which he had used for surreptitious entries into their homes during his spy escapades after World War II. There was also a phony Russian passport with Erianne's picture in it. In one of the cases were a copy of a letter from Erianne to J. Edgar Hoover, and a handwritten response from Hoover's secretary. The second letter was folded in such a way that only the salutation and the signature were visible. It could have contained anything from secret information to an acknowledgment of a compliment.

We were distinctly aware that some of the memorabilia were probably authentic, and that some of them were probably not, and that the entire purpose of the gun display and the other personal mementos was to impress visitors and potential clients with Erianne's far-reaching connections and experience in the field of high government security. It was good theatre.

After we all sat down, Erianne pleasantly inquired of Kagan, "I'm an old New Yorker, too, you know. I used to hang around in Little Italy a lot. I'm trying to remember what's on the corner of Mulberry Street and Hester Street."

"Umberto's Clam House," Kagan shot back. Kagan ate there often.

"That's right," said George, nodding his head. There was a dead pause in the conversation.

"Well, George," said Kagan, now sensing the point of the question, "are you satisfied now that we actually came from New York?"

Erianne laughed and shook his head as if to say, "You can't be too careful in this business."

He told us that he had spent fifteen years in espionage for the U.S. in Europe after the Second World War, but wouldn't say for whom. He had been in Colorado Springs for ten years, and now was working to crack a 165-million-dollar gold certificate fraud.

We asked him how he had gotten involved with the cattle mutilation mystery.

"I saw the articles in the newspapers," he said, "and I was curious. I started checking around. I asked some of my inside people, you know"—his supposedly highly placed sources inside the government's intelligence community.

"They thought it was a secret project of some sort. These people have access to classified material. They told me it might be a government thing, or possibly some kind of renegade CB warfare operation. They said it could be the result of a long string of interlocking secret projects over the last ten years. They also said something about *Clostridium* bacteria."

Kurt Peters mentioned something about how good a fatal *Clostridium* CB weapon would be for something like assassination purposes. The idea, he said, was that you would normally find *Clostridia* in the body of a murdered man once he began to decompose, and pathology examinations would never find the fatal *Clostridium* that had killed him, since it would blend so well with the usual complement of bacteria in a dead body.

All this was interesting, but not to the point. What was crucial here was that Erianne was telling us almost exactly the same vague story he had told Sanders and Aldridge five years ago. We asked ourselves one question: if this guy is as well-connected as he strives to appear, then why hasn't his story changed at all in five years? It did not make sense. The only additional statement he made was that the CBW operation was called "Project Jerome." Beyond that, the story was the same.

Because of this, we had a feeling that the entire thing was made up. We continued to press him for more details. He could not supply any. Finally, his responses began to change as he saw that we were not swallowing the bait as Aldridge and Sanders had.

"Well, maybe that information I got wasn't really so important. Who knows?" he said. "Many times you begin to follow one lead and come up with a lot of incidental information that's not connected to your case, you know? Maybe by asking about the cattle mutilations you get in touch with other secret goings-on that have nothing to do with the mutilations. It might very well be that all that CBW information I got had nothing at all to do with the mutilations."

Interesting, we thought; very much so. If he thought the information was so incidental, then why had he so vehemently pushed it on Aldridge and Sanders? And why was he backing down so quickly when we seemed to resist accepting the Project Jerome story without updated information? We were almost positive that he was backing down because the story was pure bullshit.

"Yeah," he said, "it doesn't come together like a normal case."

Erianne and Joe Burns both drew some suppositions about possible government involvement because of the way the CBI's investigation had degenerated into such political bickering and animosity between the agency and the county sheriffs.

"The CBI came and said 'Send all your samples to us, and we'll take care of it.' People sent them stuff and they never got it back, and they got no information either, no test results," said Erianne.

We knew about this, but it was not so strange to us. It was too clearly a case of the sheriffs feeling outclassed and condescended

to by the well-funded, slick, and probably officious CBI. They had tried to save face by refusing to accept the CBI's findings and accusing the CBI of covering up. We did not accept Erianne's reading here. In effect, it was the same as the mutologists' assessment and did not take into account the role of local politics and human motivations.

Erianne and Burns then began to talk about their own investigative efforts during 1975, 1976, and 1977. They had made a map of reportedly mutilated cattle, pins stuck in a paper state of Colorado.

"We found a pattern," said Burns. "Over time, between 1975 and 1976, the mutilations moved in a west-to-east direction, with a northward curve." We looked at the map. Sure enough, the distribution of mutilations was thickly clustered around Colorado Springs in 1975, gradually began to reach east and north over time, and ended in a scattering of pins around Sterling, Colorado, in Logan County in 1976, where Tex Graves had hosted the last major wave of mute reports and UFO sightings.

This pattern, of course, could have meant anything. Apparently, Burns and Erianne felt it meant something, but did not seem to know exactly what. As we looked at the map, we had a bright idea what the northward-eastward drift might mean.

First of all, these were, as usual, *reports* of mutilated cattle, not confirmed mutilations. And what of media-generated panic reports? Information like the word of cattle mutilations always disperses from areas of concentration and density to more rural and far-flung areas of lesser population, lesser concentration of newspaper influence, and more leisurely, slower-responding populace. It is a fact that the newest fads start in the cities and reach the kids in farm country last of all. It's the same principle here. So, as time went by and the effects of the cattle mutilation phenomenon spread to more distant rural areas, reports began to occur in these places.

This meant that, far from being any indication that the "mutilators" had gradually moved their actions northeastward, the pattern was a perfect mirror of the way mass psychological effects have a tendency to manifest first in areas of high population density and then move outward until the effect reaches a natural limit and simply stops. Their pattern map was an excellent visual representation of how the mutilation *phenomenon* spread its effects from rancher to rancher and from sheriff to sheriff along the same lines via the media.

Burns continued the narrative. They had checked, they said, into the possible involvement in mutilations of the Army chopper pilots from Fort Carson.

"We thought maybe it wasn't an official operation, but that someone was using unauthorized aircraft to do this," he said. That fit nicely with Lincoln County Sheriff Leroy Yowell's notion about Viet Nam combat pilots playing war games.

"I checked all the P.O.L. figures, the petroleum, oil, and lubrication figures for all the choppers in the area, including the ones at Fort Carson at the time of the mutilations to see if there was some increase in consumption. That might indicate extra flights during that period that could have been part of the mutilations.

"I got nowhere. The figures were unchanged," he said.

Since they were talking about possible military involvement, we asked them if they knew about the plastic satchel with the gloves, scalpel and cow parts that had been found in Lincoln County.

"Sure, sure," said Erianne, "we know all about that satchel."

There was a pause in the conversation. Joe Burns looked at Erianne for a moment. Then he looked at us.

"Did you know that there was a second satchel exactly like the first? It was found in El Paso County not too long afterwards."

A second satchel?

"What was in it?" we asked.

"Well," said Burns, "there was a pair of surgical gloves, a scalpel with a Federal stock number on it—and a CVC helicopter pilot's helmet in it, too—"

One of us cut him off. "Wait a minute. Did you say there was a chopper pilot's helmet in the second satchel?"

"Yes," said Burns.

"Then how did the helmet fit into the satchel?" we asked.

Burns looked perplexed.

"Look," we said, "you say that the second satchel, which we've never heard of before, was *exactly the same* as the first, and it had a flight helmet in it. But the first satchel was a skinny, plastic zipper valise, about twelve by sixteen inches. There was no way a helmet could fit inside it—"

Erianne quickly broke in.

"Er, well, this second satchel was—" He and Burns exchanged quick glances at each other. They were both suddenly very tense and confused.

"It was more like a kind of bag," said Burns, quickly.

"You mean like a gym bag?" one of us asked.

Burns visibly relaxed. "Yeah, yeah, that's it, like one of those gym bags."

Both of us suppressed our immediate desires to pin Erianne and Burns right there. It was obvious that they were lying. Not only had they never seen the first satchel, but they had visibly panicked when we innocently pointed out the discrepancy in the story.

We squelched our smirks and asked them to continue.

They told us they had gone to the site of a mutilation and found this second satchel there. They said they had also found some small, numbered aluminum tags. They said they had found a reflector on a metal rod, the kind the highway department puts up on dangerous curves in the road so your headlights will catch them before you go into the turn. They said that this reflector, instead of being set to point horizontally down the road, was bent so that it would reflect light upward, ostensibly so a mutilation site could be spotted by someone in a helicopter with a searchlight. Erianne said he had found a puddle of hydraulic fluid on the ground at one mutilation site.

We nodded and took notes, but frankly did not believe a word of this. It fit Erianne's and Burns's style, just the way their theatrical business cards did.

Just to see what would happen, we offered them Sheriff Yowell's idea about recently transferred Viet Nam combat pilots recruiting medics to fly with them on their cattle mutilation war games against the local sheriffs and ranchers. Predictably, Burns had some stories for us that fit right in with the theory.

"Oh, yeah," he said. "I identified a couple of young kids who were medics, members of one of the EMTs, emergency medical teams that are detailed to choppers. The mutes followed them. Wherever they went, there were cattle mutilations. One guy could even predict where a mutilation would occur. We monitored him, and he was right. We shook him down a few years later, but he wouldn't talk, wouldn't tell us anything."

Inwardly, we were howling with laughter. What a tale! If this kid could predict mutilations, then why hadn't Erianne and Burns broken the case right then and collected the $25,000 in reward money? If they could monitor the kid's prognostications, they certainly could have surprised a mutilation in progress, or taken some photographs, or coaxed a carload of sheriff's deputies to watch the area. The story was an obvious fabrication, just like the second satchel with the flight helmet in it.

Erianne's wife called and told us to come up to lunch. We climbed the stairs into the dining room to find that Mr. Erianne had not lost his New Yorker's touch. Laid out on the table was a perfect kosher delicatessen buffet spread, precisely the kind of platter that appears in New York at protracted business meetings like this one. George had class, that was for sure. We continued our discussion as we ate.

Erianne and Burns continued to regale us with information, while Kurt Peters sat and listened quietly, occasionally drawing on his pipe.

They said they had checked into cult activity around the Springs at the time of the mutilations as well.

"There's lots of it," said Burns. This was no news to us, since Carl Whiteside at the CBI had already confirmed it for us.

Talk finally turned to the missing *Brush Banner* editor, Dane Edwards.

"Yeah, he was here," said Erianne. "Around November or December of 1975, while he was supposedly on the run. I put him up for a few days. He claimed that two guys were tailing him. I taped a couple of hours of him reading from the manuscript of the book he was writing about the mutilations. He really thought it was a CB warfare operation, that he had the answer. I was trying to get some financial backers to help him finish the book and publish it. Eventually, he was not making a whole lot of sense. He was too far out. He had a lot of good ideas, but I dropped him. He didn't really know what he was talking about."

We asked Erianne if he knew that Edwards was wanted in Denver for defrauding a hotel keeper.

"Oh yeah, I saw the warrant. Edwards was that kind of guy. Shady. I finally figured he was on the run to stay out of jail, not because anyone was chasing him."

The conversation slowed as the food disappeared. Finally, it was time to leave. We thanked Erianne for his hospitality and we all promised to keep in touch from now on, to share information. As we were about to step out the front door, one of us turned to Erianne and mentioned the reward money.

"George, you never mentioned the $25,000 that was up for grabs. How could someone like you invest all that time without thinking about the money?"

"Oh," said Erianne, waving his hand in dismissal. "I was never interested in the reward money. I just like a good mystery, that's all. I wanted to crack this one and beat everyone to the punch."

"And pigs have wings," we thought as we drove back to our hotel.

I'm Not Very Good At That, You Know

From Erianne's home we drove directly to the offices of the Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph* to meet with Dorothy Aldridge. She came to greet us when we entered the newsroom.

Aldridge was exactly as we had pictured her: a pleasant, petite, slender woman in her sixties, with blued gray hair. She spoke and answered questions slowly, had a slightly bewildered air, and although she didn't exactly often say "Oh, my!" in breathless tones as she spoke, her conversation gave the impression that it was filled with such expressions of naive surprise. She wore a pair of plastic earrings in the shape of tiny windmills: each of them was a different color, and they looked as if their blades would turn if you blew on them.

Aldridge showed us a Xerox of her latest article on the cattle mutilations, called "Psychic Blames Cattle Mutilations on Space Aliens."

She was still at it.

The psychic, a local figure named Joe Rock, had said that "alien forces" were performing the mutilations for "scientific study" and to keep track of the mineral content of the various parts. He said the aliens sent him psychic messages all the time, that they were from Mars (he apparently had not seen the results of the Viking mission to Mars in the mid-1970s), and that they needed gold from Earth for the power plants in their spaceships. He had never seen a spaceship, but often felt the presence of these aliens as "pressures that encompass the head and heaviness on the feet as if they are weighted." He said the aliens had given him a mathematical formula they said was used in building the pyramids. "I've shown the formula to mathematicians but they can't figure it out," he had said.

We didn't doubt this at all. Aldridge quoted him as saying that he had seen records in Tibet about the existence of the lost continents of Mu and Atlantis, and that the ancient civilizations had had nuclear power. The piece went on and on, and the psychic made very little sense. Aldridge, it seemed, would write about anything that sounded weird enough. Only two paragraphs in the entire thousand-word article were about cattle mutilations, but the headline writer knew what sold newspapers and so had included the mutes in the headline.

We asked Alridge questions about George Erianne, about the 1975 mutilation wave, about everything we could think of. She answered very slowly and seemed easily confused. She kept saying, "I'm not much of an investigator," and "I wouldn't know how to go about finding out about that at all." After about fifteen minutes we felt as if we were having a conversation with ourselves. It was clear that her idea of news reporting had more in common with stenography than with journalism.

"I think the UFO people have the best answers for most of the cases," she explained. "Have you seen Linda Howe's film? The ending was very impressive; I thought it was excellent." She was referring to the way Howe had ended "Strange Harvest" by reading from a psychic's prediction that the parts of mutilated animals were being used by space aliens to manufacture some sort of magical serum for earth people. We assumed that she had enjoyed this segment of the film so much because it combined the two subjects she wrote about almost exclusively: paranormal events and flying saucers. Of all the people we had met so far, Aldridge was the only one with whom we felt a sense of absolute hopelessness. She simply had nothing to say, beyond what she had said in her articles. She seemed thunderstruck when we tried to interest her in some of the logical twists and turns we had taken in trying to figure out the mystery. She had trouble following the reasoning.

This was the person whose UFO articles had almost singlehandedly fired the start of the mutilation phenomenon in Colorado in 1975. This was the person whose sensationalistic, shallow, and naive articles had been the prime source of information about cattle mutilations for thousands of ranchers in the region. This woman, who constantly said, "Oh, I'm not a very good investigator" (clearly, she knew her limits), sat, all wide-eyed surprise and befuddlement, calmly assuring us that the UFO buffs were on the right track. But her lack of journalistic skill had suddenly mattered a great deal when she had been turned loose on the cattle mutilations. She had almost singlehandedly caused a statewide panic with her coverage. Apparently, the editors of the *Gazette-Telegraph* did not care about accuracy, as long as it sold newspapers.

We left Aldridge, checked out of our hotel, and headed south down U.S. 25 toward Walsenberg, Colorado. We would stay in a hotel there and tomorrow drive to Farisita, about twenty-five miles west of Walsenberg, to see David Perkins at the Libre Commune.

A Snitch In Time

We arrived at our hotel just after sunset and unpacked. Looking down the narrow westward road that would take us to Farisita, we saw the purpling hulks of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains silhouetted by the setting sun. Out there it looked like real wilderness. The colors in the sky were soft, watered pinks and blues. It was so beautiful we decided to take a ride part way down the road toward Farisita. By the time we had gone five miles we decided to pay David Perkins a surprise visit. We soon were totally disoriented.

We decided to go back down a road and ask directions at the tiny lighted house we had by now passed five times in our search. We navigated the deep ruts in the driveway for about a quarter-mile until we finally reached the house.

We left the car and climbed onto the porch. Looking through the screen door, we saw a young woman sitting on the floor, absorbed in her work, stringing tiny colored beads into what looked like earrings, pendants, and necklaces of Indian design.

"Hello," we said through the door, worried that she might be frightened by the sudden appearance of two strange men on her wilderness doorstep at eleven o'clock at night. She glanced up and strolled to the door. She said nothing as she looked at us. She had stringy hair and wore wire glasses, and had a flat, uninterested expression on her face.

"Hi," we said. "We're trying to get up to Libre; we're looking for David Perkins."

"You must be the two guys from New York," she said. Her voice was flat, and showed no surprise or emotion.

Now we knew we were in the country. This girl was not part of Libre, but she knew that Perkins was expecting two men from New York. She offered to take us up to Libre. On the way out of the house she grabbed a flashlight.

We all got back in the car and drove to a dirt parking lot at the end of the road. We parked and got out, and she immediately led us down into a rutted, boulder-strewn road at the high end of the lot. In a few minutes we were climbing an ever-steepening slope, which was the deeply pitched side of the mountain ridge. She easily picked her way through the darkness around trees, boulders, bushes, and fallen logs. We had a hard time keeping up with the dim circle of light from her flashlight. The slope got even steeper, and our legs and lungs started complaining. She continued to climb ahead like a sure-footed animal. She had not spoken much in the car, and had never told us her name. We decided to call her the Goat Lady.

After about a half-mile climb up the mountain, the Goat Lady led us out into a leveling space near two good-sized geodesic domes that were lighted inside.

She took us in and introduced us to their resident, an artist who lived on the mountain and used one of the domes as his painting studio. He said he didn't know if Perkins was home.

"But if he's not there, he's probably at Carrie's house," he explained. Carrie would be Carrie Seawell, to whom Perkins sometimes referred in his cattle mutilation articles as a fellow researcher. She was also, we had surmised, his girlfriend.

We asked the painter if we were in Libre yet.

"Yes," he said. "This house is part of the Libre Commune, so is David's, so is Carrie's, and there are a few others."

We had been under the impression that Libre would be like the other communes both of us had seen over the years, one large common house, perhaps two, where everyone lived under the same roof in a family-type arrangement, but it was actually like a small utopian village. Back in the late Sixties and early Seventies, the founders of the group had begun acquiring the land on the side of this ridge. Each couple, individual, or family built its own private dwelling on a substantial piece of land on the mountainside. Libre was actually a tiny town of sorts, of widely separated dwellings dangling on the mountainside. It had a kind of governing board, like a town council, which met occasionally to discuss problems of mutual concern, but everyone pretty well did what he pleased.

We followed the Goat Lady out the back door of the dome and began to climb again. The slope became even steeper, the going rougher, with more boulders underfoot.

Just as we were both about to collapse, she pointed ahead and said, "There's David's house."

Above us, a massive black hulk loomed off the steep mountainside. It was dark. She led us to the door and opened it. As we stepped inside, we became conscious not only that the house had a very strange shape, but that there was some kind of gigantic mass inside the space.

Someone came through another door at the opposite end of the room we were in. It turned out to be a friend of Perkins's. He and David had been farther up the ridge at Carrie's house and had seen our light climbing the hill. He had come down to meet us.

He turned on the light, and we saw that the gigantic mass in the room was a huge boulder, perhaps thirty feet high and twenty feet in diameter. It was sunk deep into the earth on the side of the ridge. It must have weighed hundreds of tons. Perkins's house was built around the boulder; in fact, the boulder was what held up the entire house.

Perkins's friend led us about a quarter-mile further up the ridge to Carrie Seawell's house, which was in an almost-level clearing near the very top of the ridge. Her home was slightly more traditional than Perkins's, with a circling wooden deck and peaked roofs that formed the shape of what looked like a star.

David Perkins came to the door to greet us. We had seen photographs of him, so we recognized him. He was tall and slender, in his early thirties, with dark hair and a thick, well-barbered moustache. He introduced us to Carrie Seawell, a striking, curvaceous woman with a mop of curly blonde hair, and we shook hands all around. Though we were completely dissatisfied with the quality of his so-called research on the cattle mutilations, our phone conversations with Perkins had already told us that he was friendly and easygoing and had a good sense of humor. In fact, despite his obsession with cattle mutilations, and the woeful research he had produced to back up his theories about them, Perkins was the only one of the hard-core mutologists who did not betray some kind of unsettling offbeat note in his personality.

We were thirsty from the climb. Perkins produced cold beers, and we sat down and started to talk. The first question he asked was, "Do you guys know George Erianne, the private eye in Colorado Springs?"

We were shocked. We had left Erianne only the day before and had decided not to tell anyone we met on the rest of the trip that we had seen him. We did not trust Erianne at all, and after we had left him, Burns, and Kurt Peters we decided that they, particularly George, were capable of almost anything. We were extremely curious to see who among the mutologists knew anything about Erianne, or knew him personally. But Perkins obviously did not know very much about Erianne at all. His bringing his name up so suddenly, at the very beginning of our conversation, was merely a coincidence.

"Yes," we lied, "we know who he is, but we didn't bother to meet with him."

"Did you know he's trying to sell a book about the cattle mutilations to a publishing company in New York?" asked Perkins.

Perkins continued. It turned out that an acquaintance of his was an editor at a major paperback publishing house in New York. The man had called Perkins for some advice when he was presented with a query letter from Erianne asking if he was interested in a book that would reveal the final secret about cattle mutilations.

"Yeah," said Perkins, "Erianne is supposed to be writing it with another guy. This other guy has a very strange name. His name is Karl, he spells it with a K, Pflock."

"Did you say Karl Flock?"

"No," said Perkins, "his last name is spelled strangely too—P-F-L-O-C-K."

We darted quick glances at each other, trying not to let Perkins know he had just blown the cover on an attempted deception. "Kurt Peters, Kurt with a K," and *K*arl *P*flock!

They had been surreptitiously grilling us all afternoon, trying to glean some leads for their own investigation. No wonder "Kurt Peters" had seemed out of place. We would have to figure out a way to handle this neatly. We now owed one to Mr. Erianne and Mr. Pflock. And who was Karl Pflock, anyway?

"What's the book about?" we asked.

"My friend says it's about something called Project Jerome. Erianne and Pflock claim it's a secret germ warfare operation behind the cattle mutilations." This was unbelievable. Erianne and Pflock were trying to sell their cock-and-bull story to a publisher as truth.

Since it was late, after one in the morning, we left Perkins as quickly as we could and drove back to Walsenberg. We would return tomorrow and spend the whole day with him.

The question of exactly what Erianne and Pflock were up to, and of Pflock's real identity, kept us mentally hopping for the rest of the trip. We solved the mystery, however, within our first five days back in New York.

Deep Cover Blown—A Short Digression

Once we arrived home, we put out the word to everyone we knew that we wanted information on this Pflock character. Almost immediately, we found out that he lived in Colorado Springs, was on the grievance committee for the Science Fiction Writers of America, that he had been the editor during the mid-1970s of the *Libertarian Review* (the official publication of the Libertarian Party), and that he liked to go around telling people that he had connections with the CIA, and in fact once worked for the Agency. This explained part of his affinity for Erianne.

Soon after, we found out that he was also a senior editor for a small publishing house just outside New York, and that for several years he had lived in Arlington, Virginia. Arlington, just outside of Washington, D.C., is a bedroom community for the capital, and Pflock's former residence there added some seriousness to his claims of affiliations with the CIA.

Apparently, Pflock was also a writer who occasionally published in science fiction magazines and a few other places, so it was he who would write Erianne's allegedly revealing book about cattle mutilations.

The last piece of the puzzle fell into place a few days later. Dave Marash had copies of the tapes Erianne had made of Dane Edwards reading from his unfinished book about cattle mutilations. He lent them to us.

There was no doubt that the tapes were authentic. Erianne's voice could intermittently be heard in the background, occasionally ordering his two Basenji dogs off Edwards's lap while he was reading. The same two dogs had jumped all over us when we sat in Erianne's basement. The Edwards tapes droned on and on for nearly three hours. Essentially, they recapped the legend of Dane Edwards we already knew. Claims of masterful surgery on dead cattle with no supporting information to verify them, intimations of government involvement, Edwards describing how he was being followed by people he thought were agents of some intelligence group. The whole thing sounded completely bogus.

Finally, almost at the end of the tape, Edwards started talking about a strange meeting he had had with someone, a man he pseudonymously called "Dr. Turner." Edwards had prefaced his introduction of "Dr. Turner" with a melodramatic account of threatening phone calls warning him off the cattle mutilation mystery, alleged break-ins in his home and office, and strange cars following him when he traveled. He told of being taken to a house by a man who introduced him to three other men. All of them, he said, wore guns. They acted like intelligence agents of some kind and obtusely threatened him to back him off the cattle mutilations.

It sounded not so much like a real incident as like someone's imaginative notion of how something like that might occur, concocted from stereotypes in movies and novels. We knew that Edwards was at least a little bit shady to begin with, so we were quite skeptical about anything he might say. Even Erianne had ultimately rejected all his ideas as ridiculous.

Edwards dramatically described his alleged meeting with this mysterious "Dr. Turner." He said that "Turner" was nervous, pale, and drawn, and that he appeared frightened and hunted, due to the moral and emotional wear and tear he had undergone as a result of his involvement with the dastardly chemical and biological warfare operations behind the cattle mutilations. Edwards said that Turner claimed to have worked directly on this mysterious secret project, but had quit because he couldn't take it. Then Edwards's description took an unexpected turn.

"I worked in the project you think exists," he quotes Turner as saying. "Bacteriological testing at Edgewood (Arsenal) in Maryland, first, and then it moved to the high security buildings at Fort Detrick named 'Supertox.' It's a high-level project, and they're not going to let someone pull their cover without striking back. And for God's sake, don't ever mention my name in this business.

"I know the things you've been after. It's all kind of silly. It was a routine program until about 1970. We went through 23,000 mice in that first stage of the program. Then it moved to Supertox, where they used goats . . .

"We were working on a toxin, a clostridial toxin. It was developed at Edgewood back in the early Sixties during Kennedy's administration. He was alive, so I guess it would have been around 1961. . . . The whole program was designed back then at a meeting held at Bethesda Naval Hospital. . . . A lot of the Army and Navy brass were there, along with some of the top research people. . . .

"They called the toxin VX, and the project was given the code name 'Jerome.' . . . They were pretty sure that the day wasn't too far off when the administration would sew up a deal

with the Soviets involving a ban on the kind of program they were setting up. They were particularly careful about this one because it was special."

According to Edwards, this group had set up a contingency plan to insure that the tests could continue even if a ban was put into effect, as it was in 1970.

"They were dealing with a bacteria, a bug made and designed at the lab at Edgewood. No one had ever seen anything like it. Even the counter lab couldn't come up with a counter agent. . . ."

According to Edwards, Turner explained that at some point the brass and members of the intelligence community came up with a plan: if the ban went into effect they would take the project underground and start testing on private cattle on the open prairies.

Hence, supposedly, the connection to cattle mutilations.

Edwards's rendition of Turner's explanation went on. Turner had supposedly told him that the cattle mutilations were focused on the lymph glands of the cattle, since they were, he said, in the same locations as those in the human body. This sounded exactly like some of the inaccurate, pseudo-scientific garbage we had heard from Gabe Valdez and Howard Burgess.

Supposedly, the cattle mutilation Project Jerome was put into effect right after the CB warfare testing ban in 1970. Edwards claimed that Turner told him that six crews went out and tested their methods to make sure they could get away with it undetected.

"Now, about the toxin, it's a hell of a thing," Edwards quoted Turner as saying. "It's an exotic—that is, it's original in every way. A dozen top vets couldn't isolate it if they had all day. It was designed for warfare, that is, for Orientals . . .

"The military brass realized that the only people we had fought for the past twenty years were Orientals. You've got to remember, we were up to our necks in Viet Nam then . . .

"What we were doing was developing a super toxin that would affect parts of the human eye. Not just any eye, but the eye of an Oriental. . . . You see, no matter how much bull we throw around about all men being created equal, there are some genetic differences. The black has the thick lips and the high buttocks, the Scandinavian has the blonde hair and the fair skin, the Oriental has the black hair, the high cheekbones, the yellow-hued skin. But more than that, there are two big differences in the eye. Researchers went through the entire anatomy looking for a really significant genetic difference, and the most pronounced were the aqueous humor and the vitreous humor, two internal portions of the eye that are starkly different from the Occidental.

"What we were told to do was to develop something that would be highly localized geographically, but that would affect the two humors of the eye. They didn't want a bacteria that would ravage over the land killing the civilian population, but they wanted one that would affect the Oriental without fazing our men.

"Jerome was the baby of the intelligence boys, they staffed the teams with their men, except, as I understood it, one researcher went along with each [cattle mutilation] crew." Supposedly, Turner said it was possible that they used helicopters. He, said Edwards, felt that the trained crews were so highly skilled that they could accomplish clandestine cattle mutilations any way they pleased without getting caught.

Edwards continued quoting Turner, as he went on about the connection of the cattle's lymph glands with mutilations. Turner supposedly told Edwards that since the lymph glands collect bacteria that invade the body in the form of infectious diseases, the mutilators took the glands to analyze the effect of their super bug. He even went on, according to Edwards, to talk about the mutologists' notion that the eye, ear, and tail were taken from mutilated cattle because they were distant from the heart and if they contained bacteria it was an indication that the infection spread quickly. He replayed the notion that the blood in the eye was "filtered more completely than in any other part of the body."

Turner supposedly said these test teams also took the animals' blood to test for bacterial concentration, but that he felt they were taking more of it than they needed, and from more animals than was necessary, to throw suspicion on blood cults and confuse the public and the police.

On the tape, Edwards then went on to weave together all the standard elements of the cattle mutilations myth: accusations (unsupported by evidence) that virtually all the university veterinary diagnostic labs around the country had been drawn into the cover-up of the secret experiment by pressure applied to them through the funding channels that supplied them with Federal grant money to budget their operations. He claimed that this was why labs like Colorado State University had returned findings of natural death followed by predator damage on carcasses submitted to them by the CBI.

He claimed that in the blue plastic satchel found in Lincoln County had been not only a scalpel, gloves, and some cow parts, but also a strap-on device to be attached over a boot sole so the walker would leave tracks that looked like cow tracks instead of human footprints. He talked of mystery helicopters, and mobile trailer truck units hauling these mutilator choppers around the West.

We turned off the tape and literally howled with delight. We laughed and laughed; we fell on the floor and rolled with glee. It all fit together so perfectly, there was not one missing piece to the puzzle. We finally understood exactly what the connection was between Dane Edwards, George Erianne, and Karl Pflock, alias Kurt Peters.

First of all, Edwards's mysterious "Dr. Turner" couldn't possibly have existed. All the things he had supposedly told Edwards were so wrong, so inaccurate biologically and historically, that we were amazed Edwards ever thought anyone would believe them. He said that Turner said that the name of the terrible clostridial toxin was VX. What an imbecile Edwards was; he couldn't even lie well. VX is the name of a well-known nerve gas, a *chemical* agent, not a bacteriological agent. VX is the mainstay of the U.S. chemical war arsenal, and the same gas that got away at Dugway in 1968 and killed all those sheep. Edwards's error in his confabulations was the mark of a truly amateurish liar.

Second, his assertion that this Dr. Turner had told him the lymph glands of the cattle were fundamentally the same as those of humans, and that they were the key target tissues in the mutilations, not only was medically and anatomically wrong, but did not fit the pattern of cattle mutilations. There was never any consistency in the parts missing in the mutilations, even though the mutologists had always insisted there was.

And the business about the racially specific bacterial toxin was the most hilarious lie of all. Edwards's depiction of Turner's explanation, comparing the physical characteristics of blacks, Scandinavians, and Orientals, could never have been spoken by anyone with a scientific background. And the allegation that the vitreous and aqueous humor of the Oriental eye were different from those of the Caucasian was even sillier. The biochemical constitution of internal organs varies virtually not at all from race to race. The entire notion was obviously and completely made up, along with the rest of Edwards's story.

The most fascinating thing was what Erianne and Mr. Karl Pflock had done with Edwards's obviously fraudulent story. They had stolen it and tried to palm it off not only as true, but as their own findings! Erianne had not heard about the secret "Project Jerome" from any highly placed government contacts. He had lifted the made-up idea from Dane Edwards's reading of his book. He had sold the Project Jerome and anti-Oriental toxin fairy tale to Ed Sanders in 1975, and Sanders had swallowed it whole. Erianne had tried to sell it to us, virtually unchanged over five years, and we had balked.

Clearly, Erianne and Pflock had taken Edwards's story, which they had to know was completely fabricated, claimed it as their own, and gone so far as to try to convince a publisher in New York that it was true in order to sell the idea for their book about the cattle mutilations.

Just for good measure, we decided to check out Dane Edwards thoroughly to be positively sure that he was as unreliable and lacking in credibility as we believed he was.

We traced Edwards to a town in Texas called Arlington, halfway between Dallas and Fort Worth. He and his wife had gone there when they had left Colorado in 1975. We called there.

His wife, Janie Edwards, answered the phone. We told her we wanted to speak with Dane Edwards.

"I want to talk to him too," she replied, with a sarcastic flip in her voice. "I haven't seen him in three years. He just disappeared one day in 1977."

She told us about his involvement in the cattle mutilation mystery from the point of view of someone who knew Dane Edwards too well.

"The man lived a lie his entire life," she said. "He told everyone he met a different story. If you wanted a story, he could tell you one right quick."

It turned out that Dane Edwards was a professional, lifelong con man and petty criminal. He had done time in prison in California years before Janie met him. He had disappeared from Texas in 1977 because the sheriff was about to arrest him for grand theft: he had been stealing from his current employer.

She explained that he had gotten into some trouble with the law in Brush, Colorado, and that was why they had come back to Texas in 1975.

She made it quite plain that their leaving Colorado had nothing to do with cattle mutilations, and that Edwards had probably concocted the whole government conspiracy theory, the story about threats on his life (along with, we now knew, the story about Project Jerome), to feed his ego with the publicity he got from Dorothy Aldridge and other news reporters and the local TV stations, and also to provide an alibi for his hasty departure.

"He never even had a background in the newspaper business when he got that job at the *Banner*," she explained. "He conned them. That was the way he worked. He would charm folks with his wit and his con-man image, and when it got right down to the nitty gritty he took the money and ran.

"He's wanted for something in California. The FBI office in Fort Worth once called me to try to locate him. His real name isn't even Dane Edwards. That's an alias." Janie had only found out about this after he disappeared in 1977, and the sheriff showed her his long criminal record and a list of outstanding warrants.

There was no "Dr. Turner," he had unearthed no connections to government programs, and he had pried the lids off no cover-ups. He had made the whole thing up. And the mutilation network, Aldridge and all the rest, had swallowed whole all the lies told about the mutilations by this professional liar.

"I've got three kids," she said. "It's a hard struggle."

We thanked her for her help. Her last words as she hung up the phone were, "If you find him, y'all tell me, hear?"

We assured her that we would.

So the great mystery of George Erianne and Karl Pflock was solved, about four weeks after David Perkins had let slip the crucial clue. Erianne might be a good private eye, but when it came to cattle mutilations he was as unreliable as Tom Adams and Linda Howe.

A few days after we had pieced all these details together, we called Erianne and confronted him with his attempt to ruse us. We told him we had uncovered his direct theft of his entire theory from the Dane Edwards tapes. George immediately admitted to the "Kurt Peters" scam. He sounded sheepish. According to him he barely knew Karl Pflock. He told us that Pflock had been chasing him for over a year to collaborate on a book about cattle mutilations. He said he had only spoken to Pflock half a dozen times, and seen him only three times, including the afternoon of his meeting with us.

"He and I have never even sat down and talked about an outline for the book," Erianne said. "I really don't know that much about him. I was hesitant to engage in the Kurt Peters deception," he said. "It was Pflock's idea. I find him a bit deceptive myself. And he's into UFOs and all kinds of weird shit like that. He was really excited when he heard that you guys were coming. He cancelled out a trip so he could be here. He came up with the Kurt Peters bit at the last minute.

"You know," he said, "I only know so much about this case, really. You guys know more than we do."

We didn't believe good old George. We called Karl Pflock and confronted him with the Kurt Peters gambit.

Pflock was shaken that we had found him out. He admitted the game immediately. He tried to laugh it off.

"We were just trying to find out what was going on," he said.

"I was reluctant to do it," he said. "It was George who suggested it the night before you arrived." These two were better than Laurel and Hardy.

Pflock went on to explain that he had worked for the CIA for about six years.

"I was on the collection side," he said. "Mostly pushing papers. At the tail end of my stay there I was editing things for them."

Pflock went on to tell us that he was a lifelong UFO buff and a member of the National Investigating Committee on Aerial Phenomena, NICAP, a defunct UFO organization in Washington, D.C. We asked Pflock what his official status had been when he joined NICAP. Had his superiors at the CIA sent him to the organization as a spy?

Pflock laughed. "No. In fact, it surprised me. When you work for the Company you've got to get approval if you want to join any sort of organization. I submitted my request to join NICAP, and I was fully expecting to be told to pass back information to the CIA. But no one batted an eyelash over it. They weren't interested at all, didn't care."

Along with Erianne, Pflock was just another "wish-they-were." He had wished that the CIA would transform him from a desk jockey to a spy when he joined NICAP, but the agency wasn't interested. And through the entire conversation, Pflock maintained that the Project Jerome tale was true, that Erianne had had its details confirmed by his "high government sources."

Life On The Ridges

The next morning, we drove back up to Libre to see Perkins, and he told us how he had ended up at Libre. When he was in graduate school at SUNY Rochester in 1969 and 1970, going for his masters degree in sociology, he had decided to write his thesis about what he called "alternative lifestyle communities," otherwise known as communes. He had chosen Libre as his subject of study. He liked it so much that when he finished the thesis he came back, bought land there, and settled in.

Libre was clearly not a poor man's paradise. Perkins and the others had to have had money to purchase land, and since neither Perkins nor Carrie Seawell seemed to have a job, we assumed that they had some means of independent financial support. They did not act like poor people, they all seemed well educated, and they weren't grubbing in the dirt to raise crops to survive. They were a bunch of happy, upper-middle-class dropouts living up on a mountain.

Perkins always introduced himself as the Research Director of the Libre School, or the Minister of Education, or some such thing. It was silly. There was no school at Libre. There was no real research being conducted up there. There wasn't even a real, functioning, experimental community.

Still, we liked Perkins, Carrie, and their friends. We spent the day consuming close to a case of beer, talking easily in Perkins's startling house, and wandering around on the ridgeside in the hot sun. In all the hours we spent with him, Perkins, who had actually written two well polished (though extremely inaccurate) articles on cattle mutilations, had very little to say about the subject. Mostly, he seemed to enjoy playing with the cattle mutilations as a purely intellectual exercise. He could flow with any theory, as long as he could exercise his imagination with it: UFOs, nuclear monitoring, CB warfare, it didn't matter to him at all. Even his attitude toward the articles he had written was offhand. He easily informed us that he didn't check or verify his mutilation writing very carefully at all.

"I just give them [the magazines] a pile of stuff and say 'Here it is.' They edit it up any way they want to."

He obviously liked the idea of exercising his imagination over the mutilations, the way theologians and Bible scholars enjoy playing with different interpretations of the Scriptures. He had a profound naiveté about the effect that his half-cocked theories and badly documented articles had had in inflating the issue of cattle mutilations into its current state of myth. Not only didn't he seem to care about this, he didn't seem to be aware of it.

He told us that during the early part of the summer, when he had traveled back to Libre from the MUFON conference in Houston, he and Carrie had been accompanied for a good part of their journey by a reporter named Bob Pratt from the *National Enquirer.*

In true *Enquirer* style, Pratt had courted them, paid their gas and traveling expenses, and tried to get a story from them. After a while it became clear to Perkins that Pratt wanted a UFO tale to splash across the tabloid's cover. Perkins was not disposed to give him one. He was not so enamored of the UFO answer to the cattle mutilation phenomenon. Linda Howe and Leo Sprinkle had just ostracized and persecuted him at the conference when he challenged the validity of their attempt to link UFOs with mutilations. Pratt, he said, persisted in trying to manipulate him into making a quotable comment about UFOs and cattle mutilations.

Even after they parted company, Pratt kept calling Perkins, trying to get him to say that he believed that UFOs were behind the mutes.

"It finally got to the point where he was calling me up, reading me these quotes, you know, that were supposed to be from me, and asking me to just please say that I agreed with them. He offered to pay me $250 if I would do it. I refused."

In the course of our leisurely day at Libre, Perkins did clear up a few questions we had about the actions of the mutologists over the past few years.

For instance, he informed us that Linda Howe had been a UFO devotee and believer for a very long time before she got involved with the cattle mutilations.

"She told me that Kenneth Arnold had been a guest in her home when she was a child," he said. This explained a good deal about Howe's UFO madness. Kenneth Arnold was the first UFO witness who, in 1947, reported that he had seen a formation of weird, disc-shaped objects in the sky while he was flying his plane. If Howe's family was close with Arnold, and she had thus been exposed to UFO lore from an early age, it certainly explained how she could deceive herself into thinking that the so-called evidence she had presented in her film was acceptable proof of UFO involvement in cattle mutilations.

Perkins also shed some light on one of Tom Adams's schemes.

When Adams had first started publishing *Stigmata* in 1978, Dorothy Aldridge had given him a nice publicity boost by writing a long article about the event in the *Gazette-Telegraph.* The piece was headlined "Teams Formed To Head Mutilation Investigations." Apparently, at the official beginning of Project Stigma Adams had dramatically envisioned "strike teams" under the direction of Project Stigma, who would zoom to the scene of reported cattle mutilations to "help" the local authorities deal with the mysterious events. According to Aldridge's article, the teams would be "dispatched by air within a maximum of 48 hours after word was received of a fresh mutilation in their vicinity."* The teams would be informed via the Project Stigma "hot line."

Aldridge had written that, according to Adams, these teams were "knowledgeable about information to gather at the site." We wondered who had trained them in their "scientific" techniques. Perhaps Howard Burgess? Or Adams himself? And there was no attempt to explain where the considerable money would come from to pay for air fare and expenses. The strike teams sounded like another overblown product of the mutologists' self-important imaginations. Perkins confirmed this for us. He had been in on the "strike team" plan from the beginning.

"It was a bunch of bullshit," he said. "Yes, it was set up, in a manner of speaking, but it never worked well or on time. What it broke down to was that when Adams heard about a mutilation he would call one of his subscribers or readers in the area and say 'Can you get down to such-and-such a place this week or next week?' They were 'strike teams' in name only."

Beyond this, Perkins had very little new information for us. We fell into the slow rhythms of the Libre day, sipped our beer, and talked about the Sixties. Carrie cooked a splendid lunch of omelettes and spinach-and-bacon salad. It was really too bad

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*Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph*, January 22, 1978.

about Perkins, we thought. No matter how detached he seemed from quasi-religious devotion to the mute issue, Perkins had to carry a heavy load of the responsibility for helping the ranchers and cops see mutes that weren't there.

After sundown we were off, on our way down to Trinidad, Colorado, about sixty miles to the south, near the New Mexico border, to meet with the chief investigator of the Trinidad DA's office, Louis Girodo.

Colorado Lou

As we drove south down U.S. 25 the landscape began to change, giving way from the rolling pasture and prairie land of northeastern Colorado to the stark, barren high plains of northern New Mexico. The terrain became New Mexico long before we reached the state line.

The next morning we went to the Trinidad courthouse to meet with Lou Girodo.

The courthouse was one of those massive old structures that had probably been built around the turn of the century. It had high ceilings, lots of brass trim, heavy mahogany doors, and tall mullioned windows that flooded its offices with light.

Girodo's salutation was, "Hi, guys. Glad you could make it." He had an expansive, flippant, sociable style, and showed none of the taciturn bureaucratic reticence or rigidity that too often characterizes local police officials. Girodo kidded, boomed, rolled his eyes, and made one wisecrack after another.

He wore the usual police investigator's garb of sport coat and tie. On his hip was a substantial holstered revolver, a .357 Magnum, which he referred to as "my office gun. When I go out into the field, I take heavy artillery."

He was a slender, intense man, about forty-two, with curly, graying hair, a large, droopy moustache and huge, penetrating eyes. There was something likeably theatrical about him. When he told us he had been a radio disc jockey and then an insurance salesman before he became a cop, it was easy to believe.

As we began to talk about the cattle mutilations, it became clear that Girodo was still somewhat confused by the events in Colorado in 1975. Although he had no pet theories and did not subscribe to any of the prevailing mutology notions, he still had not dismissed the possibility that at least some of the mutilations might have been committed by people with specific motives that the police had never uncovered.

He also acknowledged, as had every lawman we had spoken to so far, that the number of *reported* mutilations far outstripped the *actual* number of cases that were suspicious.

"We had about thirty reports in '75 and '76, but only about a dozen of those were even questionable," he said. The rest, as in all other states, had been mistaken predator damage, further proof that ranchers and deputies could not tell predator damage from surgery.

"After the reports started coming in," he explained, "the ranchers started looking at things they never bothered to look at before." And, as Pete Howard had told us about the Montana wave, they began seeing normal predation on naturally dead cattle as strange and surgical. The mutilation *phenomenon* was consistent, no matter where we encountered it.

Girodo called two deputies into the office to tell us about a recent reported mutilation in the county.

They told the same kind of story we had read in the mutilation literature dozens of times, and heard from scores of lawmen. "The carcass was fresh . . . A big hole in the belly . . . Scrotum gone . . . No blood around the animal . . . Definitely think it was cut with a knife."

Yet, despite all these observations and claims, no veterinarian or veterinary pathologist had examined the carcass to verify the deputies' claims. Their stories, though well-intentioned, were worthless and not reliable.

As they talked more about the case, certain other facts began to emerge which immediately provided some excellent background as to what had probably happened to the animal. It turned out that the rancher who owned it had injected the animal with penicillin the day before. The deputies then went on to explain that when they examined the carcass, the skin was bubbled away from the meat in the exact symptom used to diagnose death from blackleg, the common bacterial infection of range cattle. They both specifically noted that it looked like blackleg.

"There was crow shit all over the cow's head," one of them said. And they went on and on, expressing amazement and befuddlement at the animal's strange death and odd condition. These men did not realize that they were ignoring the obvious.

First of all, the rancher had injected the animal with penicillin the day before it died. This meant that *the animal was sick,* so there was nothing unusual about the fact that it was dead the next day. Penicillin is the preferred treatment for blackleg. Both deputies specifically stated that they saw gross signs of blackleg in the carcass. It was plain that the animal had been sick with blackleg, and the rancher had been aware of this and so had dosed it with penicillin. The animal had died anyway, with obvious symptoms of blackleg, and with obvious signs of predator activity around its carcass. Yet these two men, no doubt competent law enforcement officers, were completely unable to interlock these obvious facts with their belief that the animal had been mysteriously killed and mutilated!

The two deputies left. As we continued to talk with Girodo, we saw why Linda Howe had chosen to interview him for "Strange Harvest." He was not afraid to admit that at the time of the mutilation wave he had been stumped by the reports. He was also not afraid to admit that he still had not seen any satisfactory explanation for the wave of 1975. He did not agree with the CBI's findings. Such openness could, in the hands of an experienced distorter of truth like Linda Howe, become excellent material to be twisted and manipulated to imply that Girodo actually believed that flying saucers or secret conspiracies were responsible for cattle mutilations, when all along the sum of Girodo's attitude was that he was simply willing to discuss these topics freely without rejecting them out of hand.

"I'm not backing the idea that UFOs cause cattle mutilations, not at all," Girodo said. "There's no evidence at all to support the idea. But I'm trying to be open-minded, that's all, and I'm simply not eliminating the possibility. I mean, who really knows about these things? Does anyone?"

We asked about his interview with Howe. Girodo thought for a moment.

"You know," he said, "when she was here to interview me, she hit cults, government conspiracies, but when she got to UFOs, well, she was a lot more interested in getting me to talk about them than anything else."

Just to see what would happen, we asked him if he knew George Erianne.

"That guy," he said, "Jeez, yeah, I know *him*. He came to see me a couple of times during this mutilation thing. I knew what he was after, it was real obvious. He used to make up pretexts to stop in, but he was trying to milk me for information, making believe he had just come down to bullshit a little bit. It was plain that he was after the reward money. He told me so, that was all he was interested in."

Apparently, Erianne was not as well connected around Colorado as he had tried to convince us he was.

Girodo then mentioned Tom Adams. "He was one of the first people to contact me back when this stuff started happening," said Girodo. It turned out that Adams had visited him when he had come to Colorado to look into the cattle mutilations.

"He was around for a while," he said. "I even took him home with me for dinner. A very nice guy. He was asking me all kinds of questions about investigation techniques, he wanted to learn about that stuff.

"I showed him all my information. I had a hell of a file on mutilations, and the word got out about it."

We asked him if we could see the file. Girodo suddenly looked uncomfortable.

"I don't really know what happened to it," he said. "I used to keep it right here under the desk. It was a big cardboard folder. The last time I had it was the last time I saw Erianne. He dropped in unexpectedly, and we had it out, looking through it. About a week later I looked for it, and it was gone. That was about three years ago, around May or June of 1977.

"I put the word out to all the sheriffs in the counties around here. We looked for it for two months and it never showed up."

We let our imaginations play with this little tidbit. Assuming that he didn't lose it, who might have stolen Lou Girodo's file? Tom Adams? No, he had gotten a good deal of sincere cooperation from Girodo. George Erianne? Very possibly, especially since he was clearly out for the reward money. The file had disappeared one week after his last visit to Girodo's office. And Erianne had the know-how to pull it off.

On this note, we left Girodo and headed south toward the New Mexico border. Tomorrow we would meet with Ken Rommel and Eloy Martinez, and then drive up to Dulce to see Gabe Valdez. Then we would drop all the way down to Albuquerque to see Howard Burgess. After that it was a flight to Dallas-Fort Worth Airport and a meeting with Tom Adams.

6

New Mexico

Two Gentlemen From Santa Fe

Even before we met Ken Rommel and Eloy Martinez, the odor of political manipulation had seeped into our dealings with them. When we had contacted both of them from New York to confirm our appointments, Martinez had created a clumsily obvious verbal tangle while agreeing to grant us an interview.

We had phoned him and Rommel on different days. It was our intention to meet with them separately, and the reason for this was the same one that guides any interrogation that encompasses more than one witness. The idea is to compare notes between the two interviews afterwards and look for the truth that exists between the tales.

Over the phone, Rommel had seemed quite comfortable with the idea of an interview. Martinez, however, had not been so relaxed. We had called him after we spoke with Rommel, and of course he had known we were on our way to speak with Rommel. When we asked to interview him as well, he immediately agreed and said, "Sure, we'll all get together, and maybe have lunch and talk about it."

As diplomatically as we could, we explained that we would like to do this, but that first we wanted to interview him and Rommel separately.

"Sure, sure," Martinez had said, as if he had not heard us. "We'll all get together and talk about it."

Consequently, we were anticipating some problems with scheduling the separate interviews. It was our feeling that he wanted us to interview him and Rommel together so that they could dovetail their stories and avoid any slips that might embarrass them.

The simple fact was that Martinez and Rommel had seized on the cattle mutilations issue as a way of making a few political

gains—Martinez by the prestige of having received an L.E.A.A. grant and of having laid to rest a nuisance issue, Rommel by getting a permanent staff position in Martinez's office out of the deal.

The day before we arrived in Santa Fe, we called Martinez and confirmed that we would meet him the following morning at 11 A.M. That morning, from our hotel room in Santa Fe, we called Ken Rommel and confirmed an appointment with him for 2 P.M. that same afternoon. We did not mention to Rommel what time we were due to meet with Martinez. The appointments had been made through different secretaries. There was no chance for any confusion about who was to meet whom at what time.

We arrived at the Santa Fe courthouse at 10:45 A.M. and presented ourselves to the receptionist as having an appointment with the District Attorney. She checked her appointment book, and a confused look crossed her face. She went to speak with an official-looking woman who was apparently the DA's administrative assistant. This woman consulted the appointment book and smilingly informed us that our appointment with Mr. Martinez was for 2 P.M., not 11 A.M.

This was just what we had expected. Martinez, in his desire not to be interviewed alone, had pulled a little bureaucratic switcheroo. He had learned that we were to meet with Rommel at 2 P.M. and had simply tried to make believe the whole thing was a big mistake.

The assistant told us that the DA was not in his office at the moment. This was supposed to frustrate us into leaving and returning at two o'clock.

"That's OK," we grinned. "We'll wait."

Visibly frustrated but with her smiling facade intact, she ushered us into Martinez's office, where we waited about a half-hour for him.

Eloy Martinez finally bustled in, all smiles and handshakes and apologies for the apparent mixup in scheduling. We smiled and nodded back at him. He was a big, solidly built man dressed in a good-fitting brown, pin-striped suit. His black hair was longish and styled, in the fashion of local politicians who wish to appear progressive enough to capture the liberal votes while not losing the more conservative elements.

From the moment he started speaking, Martinez made it clear that although Rommel's investigation had been conducted in the best possible professional manner and had clearly illustrated many aspects of the cattle mutilations which had been obscured by incompetent news reporting and ridiculous claims by people like Howard Burgess, its primary purpose was to eliminate the influence of the mutology and UFO viewpoint in New Mexico.

"We were out to discredit each of those theories that had come up," he explained, "from the most extreme, the UFOs, to the idea that the ranchers were mutilating their own dead animals as an insurance scam."

We asked him about his official position on Rommel's findings.

"Until someone comes forward with proof, and I mean real scientific proof, not a lot of unsupported stories about microwaves and UFOs, I accept Rommel's conclusions totally," he said. "Technically, the case is still open. We'll listen to anything that's reasonable. But Rommel's results will stand until any other explanations can be substantiated by an experienced, respectable investigator whose background can be compared to Rommel's own almost thirty years with the FBI."

Martinez told us his office had been in touch with law officers from other states who had been investigating mutilations.

"Many of those guys were more inclined to pick up the cattle mutilations as a hobby rather than as an official subject of investigation," he said. "It gave them a chance to be quoted in *Newsweek* and interviewed by the local papers.

"You know," he continued, "Senator Schmitt really added fuel to the whole controversy with his conference last year."

This may have been a mild attempt to place some blame for the upsurge of interest in the mutilations in New Mexico in 1979 on the publicity drawn by Schmitt's conference. It might even have been a roundabout swipe at Schmitt himself.

"Basically, our investigation had two main goals," said Martinez. "The first goal was to create a repository for the Southwest for all information relating to cattle mutilations—police reports, news reports, laboratory reports. The second was to put to rest once and for all the extreme ideas about cattle mutilations."

Martinez explained exactly how Ken Rommel had ended up as the investigator for the grant.

"Rommel was a resident FBI agent in Santa Fe for several years," he said. "He had worked closely with the DA's office before. He worked well with the local police forces, he worked well with the Spanish community here, he worked well with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. And he had a good grapevine for information, excellent connections with the FBI laboratory and

Los Alamos Labs in case he needed to use their facilities. And, of course, there was his twenty-eight years of experience."

It was clear that Rommel was also politically well-connected in Santa Fe, and therefore the prime candidate for a perfect plum job to supplement his youthful retirement (he was only fifty-five) from the FBI. Everyone had done well as a result of this grant-funded investigation: Martinez had made his small political coup, and Rommel had gotten a full-time job.

Martinez went out of his way to point out how many people had become confused about the relationship between Senator Schmitt, his conference, and Martinez's L.E.A.A. grant. He made it quite clear that the senator had not sponsored his grant application.

If there wasn't outright enmity between Schmitt and Martinez, there was at least the issue of local sovereignty and pride versus Federal involvement. It was obvious that Martinez was happy that Schmitt had been unable to draw the Justice Department funding for a Federal investigation, and that the helm had fallen to him by default.

"The DA's office was never directly involved in investigating reported mutilations before the grant came through," he explained. "We depended for information on local law enforcement people." Which meant people like Gabe Valdez.

Martinez was openly gleeful about the results of Rommel's report.

"It puts us in a position where we can recommend that no more public money be spent on investigating mutilations. I can finally assure them that there are no UFOs involved here, no cults, none of that."

We asked him about the official status of the Rommel Report. Did it have any sort of legal status, like a grand jury investigation's report?

"It has no clear legal status in the traditional sense," he explained. "Actually, it's really a position paper more than anything else."

We asked him how his constituency had reacted to Rommel's findings.

"Gabe Valdez and his constituents are not satisfied," he said. "But we could never satisfy him and his people. The rest are evenly divided. The ranchers, the law officers, they go both ways. Some accept the predator findings, some don't. The letters to the editor in the local papers are reflecting the same thing. About half and half.

"The other yardstick is the changes in the news media's attitude toward the mutilations," he continued. "*Omni* and *Penthouse* have changed their attitude; they came around after the report was released."

Martinez seemed less concerned with whether Rommel's findings were valid and true than with whether or not they had affected the opposition. He was less concerned that they were accurate than that they were believed. It was also easy for us to see why so many people, including the mutologists, had been put off by Rommel and Martinez and had been suspicious of their motives, which were so clearly political.

Martinez brought up something else that accounted for the initial unpopularity of Rommel's report.

"Rommel was the only investigator who had the guts to indicate that some sectors of the news media might have been responsible for this getting out of hand the way it did.

"The news media picked up on Valdez," he said. "Here's a police officer with seventeen years experience, and he's talking about cored rectums, and UFOs, and dropping all kinds of technical terms, and saying 'I've never seen anything like it.' The press love to quote things like that. It sells papers.

"You also can't ignore the effect of the UFO people in this," he said. "The UFO people saw an opportunity to connect UFOs and cattle mutilations. They were able to work up some credibility because respected people were saying things to support them, people like Valdez. The whole point is that the reported cattle mutilations supplied the UFO crowd with something they never had, so-called physical evidence for UFOs. Now they can point out reputable people who are interested in the mutilations—state policemen, some sheriffs, Senator Schmitt—and try to use that to build their case.

"You know, Rommel's report didn't insist that every single case of reported cattle mutilation was due to predators. The conclusions left plenty of room for rustlers, copycats, and pranksters.

"We tried to be as objective as we could be," he said. "We listened carefully to David Perkins, Howard Burgess, and the rest of them. But these people can't back up any of their claims. Their sources are not credible. One thing Rommel did was to establish the credentials of all his sources.

"The major problem with all these opponents to Rommel's findings is that they never seem to be able to rebut his findings in an open forum," he said. "They write letters to the newspapers and talk among themselves, but they can never show any kind of proof that Rommel was wrong."

Our meeting with Ken Rommel was anticlimactic. He was friendly and cordial, as he had always been over the phone. A tall, lean, vigorous man, Rommel looked younger than his age. He had a long, bony face and carefully combed dark hair.

Rommel confirmed that, since the finish of his cattle mutilation investigation, he was now officially and permanently attached to the DA's office with the title of Director, Special Investigative Projects. His current project was the investigation of the brutal prison riot which had occurred earlier in 1980 at the New Mexico State Penitentiary.

Since his report had contained all his conclusions, there was no real need to discuss specific facts with him. We concentrated instead on the facts that surrounded his involvement with cattle mutilations, and the way he came to be chosen to head the investigation.

Rommel's position as Senior Agent at the Santa Fe office of the FBI since 1973 explained not only his close and amicable professional relationship with Martinez and the New Mexico State Police, but also why he had been chosen for the post of Director, Special Investigative Projects by the DA's office after his retirement. Before he had come to Santa Fe, he had been assigned to FBI offices in New York, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Puerto Rico.

"I ended up in Albuquerque initially for my last assignment because I had never lived in the Southwest," he explained. "I was fed up with cities, all the noise and congestion and dirt." From the Albuquerque office he had been sent to Santa Fe as Senior Agent.

"Since I was the Senior at this FBI office, I had lots of experience working with the DA's office. Over the years I got to know Eloy and the staff. Eloy knew I was going to retire when I hit the Bureau's compulsory retirement age of fifty-five, and when it looked like the L.E.A.A. grant for the investigation was imminent, Eloy asked me to step in after I retired and run the investigation."

There was no doubt in our minds that Rommel's being chosen to head the cattle mutilations investigation had much more to do with Martinez's desire to add a special investigator to his staff and Rommel's desire for a police job that would keep him busy and well-off, than it did with any special interest either Rommel or the DA had in cattle mutilations.

"I'm really glad that that mute investigation is finally over," said Rommel. "There was just too much bullshit involved in it, all the UFO business and the press involvement."

Rommel gave us his impression of the mutologists and self-appointed cattle mutilation investigators.

"It's difficult to lump them all together," he said. "I have very mixed emotions. Most of them are a collection of misfits and the cattle mutilation issue presents them with kind of social order, a reason to live and make themselves feel they're important.

"Some people, though," he went on, "have been sucked into it without realizing what was happening to them. They make statements about the so-called mutilations, they're quoted and misquoted by the news media, they achieve national recognition. Then they're called by many people who are interested in this kind of thing, and they start adopting and believing the quotes that have been attributed to them. They get locked into playing the role that was given to them by the press, and after a while they can't extricate themselves. This kind of cycle is particularly true for law officers who become proponents of strange theories about the mutilations."

It was clear that he was talking about Gabe Valdez here.

"I'm really not very interested in the mental gyrations of why people get involved in things like this," Rommel said. "I followed the training and experience of my FBI career. My orientation is simply to answer a few simple questions. Was there a crime committed? If so, who committed it? It's that simple.

"I did not find one *credible* source that disagreed with my findings. All the people who publicly disagreed with the outcome of my report are wingdings or flips.

"Look," he said. "I've been accused of investigating the people involved in this thing rather than the actual cases." We were sure he was referring to Howard Burgess's letter to Eloy Martinez. "That's simply not true. I didn't want to be accused of secret police tactics." But it was unavoidable, we knew, to have to address the qualifications of the mutologists like Burgess if one wanted to explain why the cattle mutilation hysteria had entrenched itself so firmly in the face of a huge body of reliable evidence. It was on this point that Rommel had been accused by Burgess of attacking innocent people.

"You've got to understand," Rommel said, "that almost all of the believers in bizarre causes for the mutilations are UFO believers too. But they all made one mistake when they jumped from UFOs to mutes. They forgot that in the case of the cattle mutilations there's a trail of evidence to be evaluated. And by evaluating this evidence you discredit all their claims.

"There was not one rancher, not one person, who was able to point out anything wrong in my report," he said.

We elected not to tell Rommel that we had found several glaring errors in it.

"Look, it's obvious that a small number of reportedly mutilated animals in other states may have actually been cut up," he said. "But it's completely unimportant. There's always the possibility of pranksters, copycats, and thrill-seekers. That was not what I was investigating.

"I think that part of the surge of cattle mutilation reports in New Mexico was due to the rise of the part-time rancher in recent years," he explained. "The ranchers can't get cheap ranch labor anymore, so they don't have people to check on the range cattle very often. No one sees the animals as often as they used to. The cattle die because they aren't watched and supervised closely enough. They get sick, and no one notices it for days and more. When the rancher finally goes to look at the herd, he finds one of them dead.

"We never found it necessary to subject any of the cases covered in the report to chemical analysis," he said. "The traces of predator damage were so obvious that it simply wasn't necessary. Wait, I take it back. We did have three of them analyzed. One animal showed evidence of severe diarrhea and internal bleeding, indicating that it was sick before it died, and two of them came back positive for blackleg."

Rommel explained that all the supposedly strange findings on the carcasses had turned out to be mundane. "The supposed puncture marks, 'needle marks,' looked exactly like rattlesnake fang wounds, puncture marks from the beaks of scavenger birds, and the normal signs of decomposition.

"It was unbelievable that the ranchers had actually reported those animals as suspected mutilations," he said. "The evidence at the scene was always overwhelming for predator activity. The damage was ragged, in many cases either we or the rancher or another witness had actually seen predators at work on the carcasses, and in most cases there was plenty of ancillary evidence."

We asked Rommel if his investigation had uncovered any evidence of cult activity.

Rommel chuckled. "The only cult I discovered was the cult of believers in mysterious cattle mutilations," he said. "No, I discovered no cults or cult activity that could have been responsible. You've got to understand that northern New Mexico, Rio Arriba County, where most of these mutilations were reported, is one of the most superstitious areas in the United States. You've got surviving Indian religions and all the old Spanish folklore, and the people are susceptible to strange stories. We even had a few witches come forward and offer to help us. We appreciated the offer, but what were they going to do?"

We then asked Rommel about Dr. Nancy Owen's role in his report.

"Nancy came to New Mexico right after my investigation started," he explained. "She called me and asked if she could become involved in it. She had done some work in cooperation with the Benton County, Arkansas, Sheriff's Office on the reported mutilations there in 1978 and 1979. She had a small grant pending to do an anthropological research study on the cattle mutilations there.

"I told her that if she got the grant, if she got some official endorsement of the work she was doing, I could let her work with me.

"Then she had me invited to that conference on cattle mutilations that was held in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1979. It was set up by a man named B. J. Kready, a lawyer who was involved with the Humane Society. The DA there sponsored it. It was mostly to get some publicity for Kready's cause. He's a big animal lover. It was the same kind of public relations ploy that's cropped up before, where people use the mutilations to promote themselves.

"After the conference, Owen got the grant, and I finally hired her to write the report because I needed a writer who understood the subject and could produce something in a readable style. She was paid for her work. It was strictly a business deal, done under contract."

Rommel stated the basic goals of the investigation. "The first purpose was to determine if this thing was a genuinely serious phenomenon or not. I think I demonstrated that it's not. The second goal was to determine if it is a law enforcement problem, and I also determined that it's not.

"You've got to understand something," he said. "With the conclusion I reached I worked myself right out of a job. I could have strung that investigation out for years. I could have come up with indeterminate findings, demanded more staff, more funding, and really played it up into a nice featherbed. But I didn't, because that would have been wrong, and also because the case was so clear-cut and so obvious.

"If you want to see someone who's stringing the cattle mutilations issue out and deriving benefit from it, take a look at Tom Adams and *Stigmata*. That publication is a piece of junk. He's selling it, selling subscriptions to it. And also getting lots of free publicity. All the people on that garbage grapevine are. I'm glad I'm finally finished with the damned thing. I was never that interested in cattle mutilations to begin with."

We asked him if he had checked with the CIA or any other national intelligence and security agencies about their possible involvement in cattle mutilations.

Rommel laughed. "As soon as I got into this thing I talked with a few friends at the CIA on an informal basis. They assured me that the agency had no involvement in cattle mutilations." We searched Rommel's demeanor for any signs of the discomfort Linda Howe had claimed he displayed when confronted with this question. All we could see was that Rommel thought the whole idea of CIA involvement was laughable.

In response to Howard Burgess's accusation that he had substituted paint chips for the supposed UFO flakes Burgess had given him for analysis by the FBI lab, he said these charges were also absurd.

We asked him what he thought of the recent findings that had come out of Canada and the Iowa State University lab, confirming a handful of mutilations as the work of humans with knives.

"I won't comment on the Canadian investigation or the other one," he said. "They may be on to something up there. But regardless of what they find up there, or in Iowa, they won't be able to tie it into anything down here. What happened here was predators and mass hysteria."

We asked him if he had ever spoken to George Erianne.

"Yeah, I spoke with him. He's supposed to be some kind of sharp private eye. He never told me anything about working with the FBI.''

We told Rommel of Erianne's claim that he had actually been hired to guard J. Edgar Hoover on one occasion.

Rommel's face corrugated into an expression of extreme disgust.

''If he says he guarded Hoover, he's full of shit. Hoover created the FBI, he lived by it. He would never have brought in an outsider to work close to him.''

Rommel offered to show us some of his color slides, from which the photos in his report had been made. They were at his apartment. We drove with him to the development where he lived, on the outskirts of Santa Fe. He pulled out some of his files from a padlocked cabinet in his office. Then he set up his screen and slide projector.

Over cold beers, we watched as the succession of grisly images flashed across the screen. In color and through the projector, the wounds' ragged condition was even more obvious than it had appeared in the black and white reproductions in the report. It was unbelievable that anyone, especially the ranchers who had reported them, could have even entertained the idea that those wounds might have been surgical in nature.

We thanked Rommel and hit the road, traveling north toward Dulce to see Gabe Valdez. On the way, we reflected on how perfectly Rommel and Martinez had confirmed our initial impression of their involvement in the cattle mutilations. Martinez had made political points, and Rommel had gotten a new source of income to supplement his pension. The whole thing was handled smoothly and within the boundaries of accepted bureaucratic manipulation. There was nothing underhanded about it. It was simple politics.

Valdez Redux

We rolled into Chama late that night and checked into the motel there where Valdez had reserved a room for us. The next morning we drove to Dulce to meet with Gabe. On the way, we discussed the late-night phone call Valdez had made to us in New York less than forty-eight hours before Kagan had left for Canada.

Valdez had called in a fit of excitement. He said that he had

just discovered two new classic mutilations in the area around Dulce.

We asked him if they had been verified by a veterinarian or a pathologist.

''No,'' he said. ''But I know that they're mutilations.'' If Valdez hadn't figured out by then that his personal opinion was not worth very much as a confirmation of a cattle mutilation, we were not about to try to instruct him.

We had suggested that he find a local veterinarian and have the man take samples from the wound edges, and of the tissue around what Gabe had assured us were needle puncture marks on the animal's forelegs. He said he didn't know if he could get a vet to do it, but that if he couldn't, he would do it himself. We warned him that he was risking his credibility by doing this.

''I'll be careful,'' he said. What could we do? He didn't seem to understand how crucial it was to be able to prove that any sample had been collected properly, according to established laboratory procedures, and by someone who knew what he was doing. We reminded him to put any samples he took in the refrigerator, not the freezer. We told him that we wanted him to send the samples air freight to Dr. King at Cornell University for analysis. We would pay the cost.

''OK,'' said Gabe.

The morning when we met him in Dulce, the first thing we did was ask about the samples from these two animals.

''I took them myself,'' he said. ''They're in the refrigerator.''

We gave him the address of the Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell and asked him to send them off as soon as he could. Valdez agreed. His professional reputation could be riding on those samples. If Dr. King was able to show any drug traces or anything else abnormal in them, Gabe could counter the awful impression of himself that had been tendered in Rommel's report. He might also be able to add some new, reliable information to the mutilation mystery.

He told us about the two supposed mutilations the samples had come from.

The first animal; he said, had had two puncture marks, a quarter-inch in diameter and about two inches apart, in its upper left front leg. He said that only the rear end of the animal was gone, nothing else.

''It was a five-month-old heifer,'' he said. ''There was blood splattered on the tail.''

His description did not sound at all like the usual mutilation report. He said nothing about a lack of tracks or clues, nothing about broken legs, nothing about UFOs or chopper sightings. There was nothing about the mysterious disappearance of the tongue, eye, udder, or sex organs. This sounded like a cow dead from natural causes, whose rear had been chewed out by predators. The only thing odd about it was the two puncture wounds, and those were not only in exactly the right place for a snakebite, but had not been confirmed as punctures or needle marks by anyone qualified to make such a judgment. Valdez had "confirmed" this mutilation all by himself, without the benefit of any help from anyone knowledgeable. It looked as though he had learned nothing from Rommel's exposure of his sloppy work on the Gomez mutilations in 1976 and 1978.

According to Gabe, the other animal had been missing its tongue, its tail, and an ear. He said he had seen a bruise under the foreleg which he thought was a needle mark.

"There were blood smears on the top side of the animal," he said. "I think they were wipe marks where whoever it was cleaned off their knife blade."

As in the case of the first animal, Gabe had made these conclusions without the benefit of any reliable experts.

"I'm sure about these because both ranchers said that they could tell the animals were cut," he declared.

It was really too bad. Gabe was a good cop, a terrific guy; we liked him. But when it came to cattle mutilations, he seemed to lose all traces of simple common sense.

We all drove over to Manuel Gomez's house and settled into the living room with Manuel, his son Edmond, Gabe, Mrs. Gomez, and a few of Manuel's many other sons and daughters. It turned out that Edmond had gone with Gabe to look at the first recently reported mutilation.

"Oh, it was definitely cut," he said. "And there was no smell, no eggs from flies, no bloat. It was unusual."

He and Valdez had gone there the day after the animal was discovered. They estimated it had been dead about two days. Of course, neither Edmond nor Gabe had done any research to see if the animal's apparent slowness to attract flies or to stink had any natural explanations before they classified it as strange. More interesting was the way their description of the animal's condition so closely paralleled Linda Howe's and Bob Blake's descriptions of Blake's dead horse.

Edmond also noted that the rancher had told him the animal was never vaccinated against any common animal diseases. This, of course, made it more than likely that the animal had succumbed to any one of a number of range ailments. Yet Edmond and Valdez had decided the animal was mutilated, and that was that. It was the Blake case all over again.

"There was no blood around the rear-end wound," said Edmond. This directly contradicted what Gabe had told us not an hour before.

"We saw drag marks where the animal had dragged itself into the bush," said Edmond. "Its legs were out. It died while it was moving."

This was a clear indication that the animal had been deathly sick, almost immobile before it died. Why didn't Edmond see this obvious symptom of natural death from poisoning or disease for what it was?

"There's a uranium deposit seven miles from where it was found," he said ominously. So here was part of the reason for his and Valdez's blindness to the evidence. They were still caught in the scenario that said the mutilations had something to do with mineral prospecting or radiation monitoring.

Edmond went on to talk about a recent UFO sighting. He said he had seen the same round, bright yellow UFO that he and Valdez had reportedly spotted around Dulce for the last three years.

As we were leaving the Gomez house, we asked Edmond about how the whole thing had started back in 1976 with the first reported mutilation of a Gomez animal. We asked Edmond if he had been puzzled by that first reported mutilation.

"Oh, I knew all about mutilations before we ever had one here," he said. "I had read about them and heard about them in Colorado and other places."

So. Edmond had a good deal in common with Bob Blake's wife, who had been programmed to see mutes no matter what the evidence said. Since the Dulce mutilation wave had begun in 1976 with Edmond's discovery of a dead animal, there was now reason to believe that the Gomez "mutilations" might in reality be no more odd than the Blake horse.

We left Valdez and started back for Albuquerque to meet with Howard Burgess. Before we left, we pleaded with him to be sure and send those tissue samples to Dr. King at Cornell as soon as he could.

"I will," said Gabe. "Don't worry."

It turned out that, although we asked Valdez about the samples at least half a dozen times over the next eight months, he never sent them.

Dismal Science

The trip down to Albuquerque was exhausting. The weather was murderously hot, and the miles between Dulce and Albuquerque seemed to multiply rather than diminish as we drove. We arrived in Albuquerque late that night and slept until the blistering New Mexico sunrise lanced through our windows and woke us shortly after dawn.

Later in the morning, we drove to meet with Howard Burgess at his home. Howard and his wife, Lovola, a trim, gray-haired woman in her mid-sixties, with a cool, alert, businesslike manner, greeted us at the door. We all sat down in the Burgesses' living room.

"I have a message for you," said Burgess. It turned out to be from Tom Adams in Texas, who knew we would be seeing Burgess a day or two before we left for Texas and had left the message with him. He would see us two days from now, on Sunday. This was the first time the mutology network had worked for us in any way separate from passing information about cattle mutes. Its efficiency was impressive.

Burgess began with his reactions to the Rommel Report.

"It's all plain, outright lies, and when it's not that, then it's truth taken out of context so it doesn't tell what really happened," he said. Unfortunately, Burgess could not give us a single example of where Rommel had lied.

"I spoke to an FBI agent in Albuquerque about Rommel," Burgess said. He did not offer to identify the agent. "He told me, 'Look out for Rommel, he's crazy and vicious.' "

Burgess was big on personal slurs like this. We had heard such things from him before. Why, if the lies in Rommel's report were so blatant and Burgess had been wrongly discredited, didn't he take the opportunity to file a civil law suit against the District Attorney's office? Because, we knew, there was no way on earth that Burgess was a big enough fool to submit his crack-brained notions to the hammer of judicial logic. Somewhere deep down, Burgess had to know that his ideas were all wet, even if he was not capable of admitting that to himself.

"I heard that Rommel had something on Eloy Martinez," he said. The sly, gossipy, wounded tone of his comment embarrassed us. "I heard that he's holding something over Martinez's head, and that's why he was given the job of heading the investigation. I heard this from several people, and some of those people were *official*."

This claim sounded exactly like the others Burgess was fond of making, the ones about his top-level security contacts with "high officials" whose names he could never mention. Of course, Burgess had no way to substantiate this comment. And, since the comment was pure bile and probably untrue, he had done nothing with this supposedly damaging knowledge.

We steered the conversation around to the supposed UFO chips that Burgess had given to Rommel to have tested at the FBI Lab. Burgess had made the serious charge that Rommel had substituted the paint sample for the real UFO sample he had given him. If Burgess's claims were true, then this was a fabulous story of willful misrepresentation on Rommel's part, and we wanted that story.

"Howard, give us a sample of those flakes," we offered. "We'll take them to the best analytical lab in New York. We'll pay the bill. If the tests come back showing that the flakes are not paint, then we will have proved that Rommel lied in his report and probably switched the samples like you said. You'll be vindicated, and you can hand the results to all the newspapers here and let Rommel and Martinez try to squirm out of it. You can have his head on a platter, Howard."

If Burgess had any sense, he would realize the advantage of our offer and take us up on it. An innocent man, we reasoned, has nothing to fear.

"You know," Burgess said, "I only gave Rommel one tiny flake, about one-eighth of an inch by one-sixteenth of an inch, and as thin as paper. But Spall said Rommel gave him part of the sample to test. There's no way that Rommel would have had enough of a sample to divide between Dale Spall at Los Alamos and the FBI labs. That's why I think he switched them."

The only trouble with this story was that both Rommel and Spall had contradicted Burgess and said that there were *several* flakes in the sample, more than enough for the two sets of tests. It was a matter of their word against Burgess's, and we decided to believe none of them. Let Burgess prove his innocence by a new test.

"Howard, let us have a sample to test in New York," we asked again.

"Oh, no I couldn't do that," said Burgess. Before we could try to convince him, Lovola Burgess broke into the conversation.

"We're down to the end of the jar, you see," she said. "We have very few of the chips left. We want to hang on to the sample."

Howard chuckled. "That's right, it's not every day that you get a piece of a genuine UFO. I'm sorry, but I can't give you anything to test."

We could see that Burgess did not want to discuss the subject further.

"Besides," said Howard, "I'm saturated with the whole issue. I don't want to devote any more time to it. I'm trying to back off of it."

This sounded nice, but Burgess had been saying things like this ever since we had first made contact with him, always claiming he "had nothing to prove," while managing to air his comments regularly in the media. He had played the cattle mutilation issue with a sophisticated series of feints, half-stated declarations, and firm-sounding statements which on closer reflection did not follow consistently with other things he said. He managed to promote both the government conspiracy theories and the UFO theories with equal commitment. Since he had first become involved in cattle mutilations, all his commentaries had been part of a string of insinuatory statements which could be easily shaped by a willing listener into anything the listener wanted to hear. Burgess's greatest talent was making ambiguous, unsupported statements that had the power to imply firm ideas about UFOs or government conspiracies, while at the same time failing to offer specific proofs to support them.

"Of course, you know I've been interested in unexplained phenomenon and UFOs for many years, ever since I had those UFO sightings at Sandia back in the early Fifties," he said. He offered us his cold grin, the sly smile that operated only around the corners of his mouth, the look that was supposed to convince us that he really *knew* something.

"You know, there are some *excellent* coincidences between UFOs and cattle mutilations." He talked about the reported UFO sightings that had come from Gabe Valdez at Dulce. And in the next breath he switched direction.

"I wonder, though, are those round tripod marks we found by the Gomez bull in 1978 really red herrings, left there by someone to mislead people, to give false leads to make us think that the mutilations were done by extraterrestrials?

"You know, on some of those chopper sightings from a few years back, the helicopters were proven to be from the CIA," he said. "I think they're as interested in cattle mutilations as I am, but they don't want me or anyone else to know it. I was told this by the FBI." Again, Burgess could not offer the name of the FBI agent who had told him this, nor could he substantiate the claim in any way.

We asked Burgess his opinion of the other members of the mutology network.

"The problem," he said, "is that there are so few technically oriented people interested in this phenomenon." Lovola Burgess broke in again.

"This is the problem with David Perkins," she said. In earlier phone conversations, Burgess had had some negative things to say about Perkins, and about others in the mutology network as well. It seemed that he did not like anyone very much, and liked to spread gossip and little barbs of character assassination about almost everyone he was involved with. Apparently, his wife shared this trait.

"Now, Tom Adams," said Burgess, "he's OK. He knows his limits relative to technical assessment. He's very good as a collector of information but he doesn't try to build technical, scientific explanations." Presumably, Burgess felt that such tasks should be left to experts like himself.

He didn't have anything good to say about Linda Howe, either.

"She called me when she first got involved with making her film," he said. "She told me, 'David Perkins is my guide and advisor.' I said, 'If that's the case, then I don't want anything to do with it.' Later, she changed her mind about Perkins and took up with Tom Adams."

This fit what we knew about Howe. Adams had more information to give her than Perkins did, but, more significant, Perkins was wishy-washy about committing himself to the UFO view of mutilations, where Adams was utterly committed to it. His point of view agreed more completely with hers.

"But I thought the film was quite well done," Burgess said.

Then Burgess said something that ripped the veil of "scientific objectivity" completely away from not only his involvement with the cattle mutilations, but also that of APRO (the flying saucer group which had been involved since the Snippy the horse case in 1967), Dr. Leo Sprinkle, and, indirectly, Linda Howe.

"We recently spent a weekend camping with Beryl Lewis and his new wife," he said. "They're old friends of ours."

We sat up straight in our chairs. Beryl Lewis was the husband of the now late Nellie Lewis, the woman who had owned Snippy the horse and had single-handedly started the flood of claims that it had been killed by a flying saucer. It had been Beryl and Nellie Lewis's dogged, never-substantiated claims, in the face of several examinations of the carcass by qualified pathologists, which had not only started the cattle mutilation phenomenon in 1967, but linked cattle mutilations firmly with UFOs from their very inception. It was through Snippy that APRO had become involved in the cattle mutilations issue. And Dr. Leo Sprinkle had become involved with Snippy as well, because of the UFO claims. The Snippy case was the linchpin that held the entire UFO/cattle mutilations network together; it was the network's cornerstone. And now Burgess was casually noting that he was, and had been, personally connected with the people who had started the whole thing years ago.

"Have you known Lewis long?" we asked.

"Oh, we've been friends for years," he said. "I've been friends with Leo Sprinkle for years, too. Sprinkle and we go out to Beryl's ranch for weekends; we've been doing it for a long time."

This was the kind of solid connection we had been looking for. All roads led straight back to the very origin of the mutilation phenomenon as a direct offshoot of the UFO subculture. The UFO psychologist, the "retired scientist," and one of the people who had started the UFO-cattle mutilation connection were all pals, had been for years; they hung out together. The same people who had been responsible for birthing the cattle mutilation phenomenon out of the UFO subculture were still involved with people (Sprinkle and Burgess) who were continuing either directly to promote (Burgess) or help promote (Sprinkle in Linda Howe's film) the notion that UFOs were the cause of cattle mutilations. Not only that, but we knew that Tom Adams, already a UFO buff back in 1970, had gotten his start as a cattle mutilation buff when he went out to visit the Lewises in 1970 to research a college project on Snippy. All roads led straight back to Alamosa, Colorado, in 1967 and the case of Snippy the horse.

As if this revelation weren't enough, Burgess dropped another bomb when we casually asked him what he knew about the reliability of the claimed figure of 10,000 animals mutilated nationwide since 1975, always authoritatively quoted as factual by the mutologists and mutilation journalists.

"Oh," he said lightly, "that figure is mine. I'm responsible for it. It came from me."

This was unbelievable. Here was one of the most demonstrably unreliable mutology theorists calmly informing us that the 10,000 figure, the dramatic death rate that was always quoted as hard fact by people like Harry Lebelson, Linda Howe, and even journalists who were not UFO buffs and mutologists, had come from him!

"Well, Howard," we asked, "what kind of established statistical techniques did you use to arrive at that figure?" We held our breath here. Maybe, just this once, one of the mutologists might give us an answer showing that he had applied some sort of rigorous, dependable methods.

"It was around 1978 or so," he said. "A bunch of us got together and discussed the whole thing." (We later found out that the "bunch of us" was only Gabe Valdez and Burgess, who had actually sat down and produced the figure.)

"We collected the number of mutilations from Logan County in Colorado in 1976. We got the numbers from Tex Graves. Then one of us remembered that someone had said that the Colorado Cattlemen's Association had said something like they would only allow one out of four mutilations to be publicized to avoid public panic. So we multiplied the figure by four. Then we went to New Mexico and totaled the figures up from here. We did it for all the other states like that, and we came out with 10,000."

Good God, we thought. Not only had Burgess been working from reams of unconfirmed reports, but he had fiddled around with the numbers. The basic data had been completely inaccurate, had no basis in reality, yet the entire force of the mutology movement was built upon it. We pointed out the figure's dubiousness to Howard.

"Oh, sure," he said. "We did it kind of wildlike. I'd be the first to say it's a ballpark number. It's a wild, rough buckshot figure. I never said it was accurate. We didn't know that people would pick it up the way they did and run with it.''

His naiveté, no, his irresponsibility floored us. He had never sought to contact those who used the number as a fact, and told them it was a mere empty guess.

This revelation literally knocked the bottom out of the mutologists' entire argument. There was now nothing at all left to their claims. Their entire position rested on the assumption, the *belief*, that thousands of animals had mysteriously been killed and mutilated over almost a decade. Now that it was clear that there were no ''thousands'' of mutilations, both the UFO and the government conspiracy ideas had nothing to stand on. There was no widespread plague of cattle mutilations.

Even more significant was the way the fictional 10,000 figure had metamorphosed into a ''fact'' because of its repeated use by mutilation journalists and mutologists. It was the Big Lie mechanism in action. The 10,000 figure had gotten into the news media, and no one had bothered to check on its reliability. Gradually, since 1978, it had been picked up and repeated over and over again as fact by various journalists and mutologists, and never once had anyone ever looked into its credibility.

It seemed that the deeper we dug into the cattle mutilations the more lies, errors, and misconceptions we uncovered. And many of these led straight to Mr. Burgess.

Finally we asked him to summarize his general opinions about the cattle mutilations.

''Well, there's no doubt that Rommel's wrong,'' he said (no information to prove this assertion). ''There's definitely an intelligence, human or otherwise, behind the mutilations.''

(Again, no proof.)

''I think it's possible that some of the mutilations have been done by cultists, and some of them have been done by copycats,'' he said. ''But some of them are the real thing.''

What did he mean by ''the real thing''? Burgess began waffling again.

''You can make a good story from any side,'' he said. ''You can take the UFO side and prove it, but you can take the government conspiracy side and prove that, too.''

What on earth, we wondered, was the man talking about? Where was the ''proof'' of the UFO explanation? None had ever been produced, unless one was deluded enough to accept Linda Howe's film as proof. Where was the ''proof'' of the government conspiracy angle? George Erianne's purloined fairy story from Dane Edwards?

It was not our aim to try to educate Burgess to the weaknesses of his arguments, or to engage him in a debate. We let his comments pass without opposition.

We drove to the airport and boarded our plane for the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. Tomorrow, we would finally meet with Thomas R. Adams, the Father of Mutology.

7

Texas

One Into Two Won't Go

Although the summer weather had been hot all through the trip, the climate in Texas was one millimeter beyond unbearable. The slightest physical exertion was agony.

We drove out of Dallas, heading northeast up U.S. Highway 30 toward a town called Commerce, about sixty miles out of the city, near Paris where Tom Adams lived. He did not want us to come to his home, but preferred to meet us on a middle ground. Evidently, he always preferred to make his appointments in public places like bars and restaurants.

We were supposed to meet him at a fast-food taco stand across the highway from the college campus. The parking lot was almost empty, but there was a long, silver van parked in front of the stand's glass windows.

Quickly, not one person, but two, emerged from the taco stand. Adams had not mentioned that he was bringing anyone with him, but we recognized Adams because he had been described to us by people who had met him. He was about twenty-eight or -nine, a good thirty pounds overweight at about five foot nine and close to two hundred. He had dark hair cut over his ears like Buster Brown, glasses, and a moustache. The man with him was a study in contrast. Lanky and sparely built, he had a full, red-blonde beard and wore a large-brimmed straw cowboy hat.

Adams introduced us to his companion. His name was Gary Massey, and we had seen references to him in several issues of *Stigmata*, where he was usually referred to as a fellow researcher in unexplained phenomena. As the day wore on, it became clear that Massey was Adams's silent partner not only in Project Stigma, but in most of his other endeavors. When Adams visited New Mexico, Colorado, and other states on his vacations to investigate cattle mutilations, he and Massey traveled together in Massey's van. We already knew that Adams had no driver's license. The reality behind the persona of Tom Adams and behind Project Stigma was actually two people, not one. They were a team, yet Adams was the only one whose name was attached to the publication and to all official pronouncements.

We suggested that we all get some lunch. Adams and Massey led us to a local Mexican restaurant where we found a table and ordered the best cure for the Texas heat, two pitchers of cold beer.

As we made small talk while looking over our menus, we observed the differences between Adams and Massey. They were opposites in almost every way, like Laurel and Hardy, or Felix Unger and Oscar Madison, the Odd Couple. Where Adams wore nondescript clothing, shapeless brown pants and a dull yellow shirt with a vest, Massey affected a large cowboy hat, cowboy boots, and Levis. Where Adams was sedate and slow-moving, Massey gestured expansively. Adams had a detached, cool, studious manner. Massey was hyper and animated.

We asked them about their obvious partnership. Adams looked pained, and before he could answer Massey burst out, "Well, you see, he has the network, and I have the wheels!"

Adams seemed almost embarrassed by Massey's straightforward explanation, which conflicted directly with his own circuitous, secretive style. Massey's comment also confirmed the impression we had been getting since we first met the two. In the world of Project Stigma, Tom Adams was the brains and Gary Massey was the brawn. That was why Adams's name was the only one officially connected to *Stigmata*. Massey couldn't be trusted to keep his mouth shut. His role was that of sidekick and companion to the Master.

There was one other critical difference between them. Massey openly, incessantly, and passionately talked about UFOs. He was, he told us, a former member of both NICAP and APRO, had been into UFOs for years, and unquestionably not only believed they were alien spacecraft and that they contained extraterrestrials, but believed they were behind cattle mutilations. In effect, Massey openly gave vent to everything we had already divined that Adams himself believed but would never admit. At the risk of making the kind of error often made by amateur psychologists, we drew a conclusion here. Gary Massey had another function: he was also Tom Adams's alter ego, his proxy mouthpiece. They had been at this together for ten years, since they were both about nineteen years old.

Adams retold the story of how he had become interested in the Snippy the horse case through a course in social psychology he and Massey had taken at East Texas State University in 1967. The case had been discussed in class. Three years later, in 1970, they had heard a tape of a phone call made to Nellie Lewis by the same professor who had brought the Snippy incident into the social psychology class. Adams and Massey decided to investigate the Snippy incident as a special class project. They called Nellie Lewis, and she invited them to come out to Alamosa, which they did in March of 1970.

"We interviewed a lot of people out there," said Adams. "Some of them had been watching for years for UFOs and had had sightings. We came back convinced that there was something out of the ordinary about the Snippy incident. We went back in June of 1970 for a month. We were convinced of the validity of the anomalous nature of the events in Alamosa. That was our first contact with cattle mutilations.

"Then, in November of 1974, there were mutilations reported here in Texas, and we felt induced to find some answers for them and for what might have happened in the Snippy case. We started collecting more and more information."

We asked Adams about his information-collecting network. It was impressive, a national operation. He was always receiving news clippings and rumors from somewhere. How had he built it up so completely?

"The network already existed," he explained. "I didn't have to create it. It was in operation through people we were already connected with," here he paused, "UFOlogically.

"When the mutes came along," he continued, "they just naturally fell into that network."

Here was further proof to support what Carl Whiteside and Rommel and Martinez had observed, and also what we had seen months ago: the cattle mutilation network was in reality the UFO network, the mutologists were in reality flying saucer believers, and the real nature of the cattle mutilation phenomenon was that it was actually an offshoot of the UFO subculture and to a great degree controlled and shaped by that subculture's needs for public acceptance, pure publicity, and the promotion of their pseudo-religious ideas and evangelical message.

And it was clear why the cattle mutilation buffs were practitioners of the same kind of unsystematic, illogical, and blatantly unscientific "proofs" as UFO believers: they were the same people waving a different flag.

Massey continued to answer the question.

"We started out as UFOlogists, but we got disgusted with the politics within the organizations, APRO and NICAP. Everyone is very competitive and political," Massey said. We completed the sentence for him in our heads. *"So we found a little corner of the unexplained phenomenon business and set up our own shop which we could run without interference from anyone else."*

We asked them about the future of Project Stigma.

He explained that they wanted to outfit his van as a "mobile laboratory" so they could perform "scientific" analyses at the scene.

"The logical next step is to get some funding from somewhere," he continued. "We want to be able to travel immediately to the place where the phenomenon is happening and get first-hand experience. We want to be able to get right to the site and depth-interview people."

He did not mention anything about educating himself in the whys and wherefores of veterinary medicine or pathology, nor about trying to master the intricacies of proper sample-taking or scientific field procedure.

We mentioned that our next stop would be Arkansas.

"We met with Doug Fogley and Don Rystrom in Albuquerque at Schmitt's conference," said Adams. "It's too bad about them. Arkansas got Rommelized."

Adams's limited capacity for insight was true to form here. He simply blamed Rommel for changing the Sergeant Fogley's mind about cattle mutilations, as if Rommel were some kind of hypnotist.

We talked about the mutilation wave in Canada, without mentioning that we had been there.

"Yeah," said Massey, "I heard that the RCMP is into the

Russians now. They think maybe the mutes are part of a Soviet operation."

Talk turned to George Erianne. We knew that Adams had visited him back in 1977, when he had met with Lou Girodo. Erianne had told us about the meeting and had laughed at Adams's and Massey's amateurish attempts to appear imposing and professional. Yet even these two had been suspicious of Erianne's tales.

"I can't buy Erianne's scenario about government experiments, that Oriental CB warfare thing," said Massey. "He claimed he could lay his hands on Dane Edwards. I didn't believe that, either."

At least Erianne was consistent. He told the same cock-and-bull story to everyone he met.

"Yeah," said Massey. "Erianne told us he was going to get that reward money because he was going to break the case."

Talk drifted back to the UFO interpretation. Massey laid his cards on the table.

"Look, you can't avoid the UFO connection. If you get deeply enough into it, you find UFOs. We tried to keep the two things separated, but you can't do it. The proof is that the veterinarians keep saying that the surgical precision is beyond human capabilities."

We almost choked on our enchiladas. Despite the claims always made by the mutology network, we still had not seen or heard of a single vet who actually said that anything he saw was "beyond human capabilities." The notion was another mutologist's dream, but Massey and Adams saw it as some sort of undeniable proof of UFO involvement.

"I mean, what kind of Earth person would do it this way?" Massey asked seriously. "What earthly group would drop mutes in people's back yards? It may be connected to the idea of ancient aliens, you know, that they were here thousands of years ago, and they're back now and doing stuff like this for some reason."

"Who knows?" said Adams. "Maybe the whole thing is a learning process, maybe someone is trying to teach us something."

He was echoing Leo Sprinkle's evangelical notion that the godlike, benevolent, angelic spacemen were delivering some sort of divine message in the form of mutilated cattle.

We asked Adams how many subscribers there were for *Stigmata*.

"About 500 altogether," he said.

While we were talking about numbers, we asked them their opinions about the gross number of cattle mutilations they thought had occurred.

"Well, the minimum estimate is 3,000 to 5,000," Adams said. "But we've heard estimates of up to 10 or 15,000." Adams, of course, provided no reliable basis by which he had arrived at any of these figures. Massey broke in.

"You can assume that for each one reported, two go unreported." He was not able to offer any logical reason why this should be assumed to be true.

On this note we took our leave. We had to catch our plane to Arkansas early the next morning, and it was a long drive back to Dallas.

About two months later, during a phone call to Adams, we tried to draw out of him a firmer declaration on his UFO position on the cattle mutilations. With all Massey's talk during our meeting, Adams had never made an outright statement himself.

"Tom, what do you really think?" we had asked.

"Someone is programming us with the cattle mutilations, but I don't know what for.

"It's an external consciousness, outside of us," Adams said. "I think if we shed more light on the UFOs there will be more information on cattle mutilations."

About two months later we called him again. After going through all our notes, we discovered that he had given us virtually no information about himself.

"I won't discuss my personal life," he said coldly.

"Come on, Tom," we chided, "What are your opinions, what are your other interests?"

His voice trembled, he sounded extremely upset, threatened.

"I don't want to discuss it," he said.

We asked him what the problem was.

"I do not seek publicity," he said. "That's not my goal. My name wouldn't even be on *Stigmata* if I could avoid it. It's only there because it had to be for the copyright notice." He paused. "I might go public, though, to make a definitive statement."

We thought we understood what he meant. He wanted to reveal himself to the world only when he finally had the proof that UFOs were real and contained spacemen, and were behind the mutilations.

"Well, can you talk to us about motives, why people get involved with the cattle mutilations?"

"There are gradations of motives for various people," he said. "Different people want different things out of it."

His vagueness was maddening.

"Come on, Tom, what do you really think is behind the mutilations?"

"The mutilations are real," he almost whispered. "There's an intelligence behind them that's manipulating them and causing them. That's all I'll say."

Still, we pressed him for a more definite statement.

"Tom, you were the advisor for 'Strange Harvest.' You knew what Linda Howe was doing right from the beginning. The film was a bald declaration for UFOs as the cause of cattle mutilations. Surely you were aware of that. Yet you lent your name to it. You always talk about objectivity. You even wrote that 'Harvest' was objective. Do you really think the film was objective?"

Silence.

He avoided the dilemma by simply refusing to answer the question. He tried to turn it around on us.

"Well, that depends on how you define objectivity. How do you define it?" he asked.

We were at an impasse. Tom Adams would never throw off his mask.

"O.K. Tom, let's talk about something else," we said. "What's going to happen to Tom Adams if the cattle mutilations evaporate, disappear from view?"

"Well, I'm interested in most other facets of the paranormal," he said. "I'm just as interested in cryptozoology as I am in mutes."

"What's cryptozoology?"

"Strange animals, Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, things like that. If the mutes go away there will still be those things, plus some aspects of UFOs, like the contactees and abductees.

"I hope the mutilations don't stop before we figure out what's going on. But I think we may never figure it out."

Which, of course, would mean that *Stigmata*, and the Father of Mutology, could prevail over that small piece of psychological turf until the end of time.

8

Arkansas

Intro. Anthro. 101

Before we met with Dr. Nancy Owen, the University of Arkansas anthropologist who had written Rommel's report and had also completed a short study of her own on the cattle mutilation phenomenon in Benton County, Arkansas, in 1978 and 1979, we reviewed a phone conversation we had had with her just before our trip.

"Yes," she had said. "I was the ghost writer for the Rommel Report." She told us about her research into the wave of mute reports in Benton County.

"I concentrated on the myths and folklore around the cases," she said. "Basically, most of the supposedly bizarre incidents are easily explainable. The whole thing could easily be the result of a delusionary spiral, especially in Arkansas and New Mexico. Most of the people who emphasize the strangeness of the cases take them completely out of context. The whole thing breaks down to predators and scavengers."

"Why do you think the phenomenon keeps occurring, though?" we asked.

"Well, it might have something to do with the local social factors," she said. "In the case of New Mexico and Arkansas, at any rate, both areas are economic backwaters. The ranchers in both places are weekend ranchers, not large-scale professionals. The big professional ranchers are completely skeptical about this thing."

This made sense. Bob Blake was a small-scale rancher; so was the rancher Kagan had interviewed in Montana. In fact, we had not encountered a single case of a reported cattle mutilation that was made by any of the huge beef-raising people in any of the states afflicted with waves of mute reports.

"I think it's helpful to try to trace down exactly how the

rumors started in a given area, beginning with the first case and following the progression," she said.

"The first case in Arkansas, for instance," she said, "was that horse. The man who was taking care of it was an ignorant farmer. The first theories were all about witchcraft activities. After it hit the paper, calls started coming in from all over the county about mutilations. The greater context influenced the development of the phenomenon and increased the number of reports.

"Once the cattle mutilation network got involved," she continued, "the phenomenon took off. The mutilation investigators' network itself *creates* the cattle mutilation phenomenon by seeding the idea of mutilations into the minds of farmers and ranchers in the areas where the reports are. There were remote farmers in this area who had been influenced, their perceptions had been affected, after they got calls from mutilation buffs chasing the phenomenon.

"Once the myth is established," she said, "people like Gabe Valdez continue to carry the lore." Owen also felt that there was another important element in the spread of the mutilation *phenomenon*.

"The scientific community's refusal, in many cases, to look into the reports has been responsible for the spread of it."

Dr. Owen had sent us a copy of the report she had produced under a small grant from the Arkansas Endowment for the Humanities. It was entitled "Preliminary Analysis of the Impact of Livestock Mutilations on Rural Arkansas Communities," and ran to about thirty pages.

Altogether, Owen's research completely agreed with everything we had unearthed ourselves.

We met Dr. Owen at the university and drove to a local restaurant for lunch. Owen, like almost everyone else we had interviewed, was initially suspicious, tentative, and withdrawn. Once she got going, however, she showered us with information.

We asked her about the involvement of the two veterinarians, France and Hatfield, in the mutilation wave in Benton County, Arkansas.

"You've got to be very careful with handling their information," she said. "They both have valid qualifications as veterinarians. But remember, they're not trained in pathology or necropsy techniques, so their findings are not completely reliable."

We asked her about the role played by Don Rystrom, the Benton County deputy who had become the central figure in the cases there, quoted widely in newspapers and promoting the more bizarre explanations for the reported mutilations, notably UFOs and government conspiracies.

"Rystrom is a publicity hound," she said. "It's funny. When Jacques Vallee was here investigating those UFO sightings in another part of the county, Rystrom got a copy of Keith Wolverton's book, *Mystery Stalks the Prairie*. Not too long after that, Rystrom's cases started following the same patterns as the ones in Montana," she said with a slight smile.

Of course. If Owen was right, Rystrom had thoroughly given the same kinds of twists in his perspective that had affected Gabe Valdez.

Owen explained how she had become involved with the mutilations in the first place. The chief of police in Bentonville, the county seat of Benton County, had been a part-time student at the university. When the mutilation reports started coming in, he had asked Owen and her anthropologist husband Jerome Rose for their help, since some witchcraft altars had been found in the county at the same time, and the chief knew that Rose was knowledgeable about occult practices.

"Suddenly, the TV crews descended on the area," Owen sighed. "From there the mutilation wave took off like a balloon."

Just as in every other state, Owen went to New Mexico for the summer in 1979, and began to collect information about the mutilation problem there as well. It was at that time she had first met Rommel. In August she invited him to the Little Rock mutilation conference sponsored by lawyer B. J. Kready.

"Kready said he wanted to set up a task force to investigate mutilation problems. He works for the Humane Society. I think he did it for publicity and to advance his career," Owen said.

"The only information we had was from Don Rystrom. Rystrom showed up with Sergeant Fogley from the state police. Fogley wasn't actively involved in the investigation; he had just been assigned to monitor Rystrom's work. He only knew what Rystrom told him.

"Fogley showed Rystrom's slides and gave a talk that was based on what Rystrom had told him. There was a lot about mystery and weird surgical precision. The conference was all over the television news.

"There was a second conference in Little Rock in October. Fogley and Rommel were both there again. Several veterinarians came in and denied that there was any substance to the mutilations, that it was all predator damage. The Cattlemen's Association made it a point to note that the people who reported mutilations were not professional full-time ranchers, but amateurs who don't take proper care of their cattle so they die. They said they'd support a task force, but that they were not going to go out of their way to do it. They didn't think the mutilation issue was that important.

"Rommel had spoken to Fogley after the first conference in August. He said, 'Your name is on the line over this thing if you back Rystrom's claims and interpret these slides as evidence of strange occurrences. I suggest you take another look at your evidence.' Fogley changed his tune after that."

Of course, the mutology network had heard about this turn of Fogley's and had interpreted it in accordance with their own theoretics. They couldn't see that it was simply one experienced lawman prudently advising another to reevaluate his position in the light of new evidence.

"Fogley came back to the second conference and showed the same Rystrom slides he had shown the first time, but this time he had done some homework and was able to place them in their proper context and explain how they could be mistaken for surgery when in fact they were predator damage."

Owen explained why she thought the mutilation phenomenon in Arkansas had not assumed the proportions it had in Colorado, New Mexico, and other states.

"First of all, we had no Gail Olson here to keep it going in the press," she explained. "We had no Howard Burgess to give pseudoscientific statements to the media. We had an analog for Valdez in Don Rystrom, but Rystrom got fired, and his influence disappeared."

This was an excellent comparative analysis. Owen had understood exactly how the different elements of the mutilation *phenomenon* had all combined in New Mexico to sustain the reports there.

"There were some funny things here," she said with a smile. "All the people who reported mutilated animals did it for different reasons. Some owners were affected by the news coverage. One guy, we know, reported one because he's got a reputation for liking to tell tall tales. In one case, there was a man who didn't own any cattle, but who saw a red flag in a tree, the kind of flag they put on truck loads when they move things, and called the sheriff's office to say that he was sure the flag had been placed there to mark the location of a cow so it could be mutilated.

"After a while, the people around here really *wanted* there to be mutilations. After the Washington County Sheriff's Office did that calf experiment in 1979 and determined that there were probably no mutilations but only predator damage, they still got reports. When they tried to explain to people that they had found that there probably were no mutilations, the owners became very irate about it. 'What do you mean it's not a mutilation!' they would demand."

We returned to Dr. Owen's office at the university to continue the discussion. We asked her about the cult artifacts that had been found in Benton County and given rise to the idea that there was a cult behind the cattle mutilations.

"There were some rock altars found in Bentonville," she said. "They were nowhere near the locations of any of the mutilated animals, so I don't know if there was any connection. They were found around the same time as the mutilations, actually just before the first one was reported." The rocks of these altars were large stones that had been spray-painted red and black, and had had various symbols and words painted on them.

"The rocks were found on the property of a man named Sam Walton, who's a local millionaire," Owen said, "by a man named Steve Ferguson. Ferguson is a very religious Christian. He uprooted the rocks and scattered them on the ground. A month later he returned and found them reassembled.

"Ferguson was very disturbed by this. He put up a cross next to the altar with a sign on it that said 'Jesus Saves.' He came back again a week or so later and found a note tacked onto his cross that said 'We Know.' Whoever was using that altar was having a good time playing games with him."

Owen explained that there had also been some old cattle skulls found that looked as though they had been used in cult rituals. The local police had set up a stakeout near the altar sites but had never seen anyone.

"We never found who the cultists were, or whether or not they were involved with any of the reported mutilations," she said.

"You've got to understand, this is a very strong Fundamentalist area. There are strong feelings among the residents against devil worship. It was easy for them to accept that as the cause of the mutilations. Jerome and I talked with a practicing witch about it. He said that no Wiccan practitioner would ever be involved in this kind of animal sacrifice, but he thought that we might find some correlation between mutilations and the full moon. We were never able to make that link, though. The reports of the mutilations never coincided with the phases of the moon."

Owen spoke about the one case of a reported mutilation that had been an obvious copycat. A cow had been found dead, its throat had been repeatedly slashed, and it had left a trail of blood across its pasture before it died. The work was sloppy, nothing was taken from the carcass, and everyone agreed that it was done by someone in response to all the news coverage.

"I think they should have looked more closely at that one," Owen said. "They might have found that it was done by a cult."

Owen told us about other events that had pointed toward possible cult activity.

"I picked up some gossip out of the sheriff's office about an old veterinarian in Washington County who they thought might have been involved in the mutilations. The man is well known to the police. He's involved with occult practices and has held rituals at his home. They said he's got a penchant for young girls, and he brings groups of young people to his home, supplies them with drugs, and they have 'rituals' that sometimes end up as orgies. From what I understand, the cops finally decided that he wasn't involved with the mutilations."

Owen agreed with us that all that was proved by the altar stones was that it was likely that there was black magic or Satanic cult activity scattered around the state. It was appropriate that this activity was found in Arkansas, since the Ozarks have a long and complex folk tradition of witchcraft which goes back hundreds of years and with which many local residents are intimately familiar.

"The sheriff's office did find an altar similar to the ones on Walton's land less than a quarter of a mile from the site of a reported mutilation in May of 1979," Owen explained. "The altar was found about two weeks after the animal was reported. But no one was able to establish a solid connection between the two things."

Owen explained that the sheriff's office was very careful of making public statements about connections between cults and cattle mutilations.

"Sheriff Pritchard in Ozark made some statements like that, and he kept getting sued by people," she explained.

Owen stopped for a moment. "You know," she said, "one of the things about the cases in Arkansas that always made me very doubtful about the mutilations being caused by people was this: the largest cattle population in all of Benton County is up in the extreme northwest part of the county. There are more cattle there to mutilate than in all the rest of the county, and there was not a single report of mutilated cattle in that area."

Then Owen pulled three photographs out of her file and handed them to us.

"Corporal Lynn Lauber of the RCMP sent these to me last year. I think you'll find them interesting," she said.

The photographs showed the front, back, and profile view of the head and shoulders of a mannequin. On the mannequin's head was a red rubber skullcap whose edges had been cut into dozens of long fringes that hung down all around the head, over the face in the front and down the back as well. It looked almost like a primitive attempt to make a rubber long-haired wig.

The photos were labeled. One label read, "Skull cap found near scene of mutilation, Grassy Lake, Alberta, October 19, 1979. Of light gauge 'balloon type' rubber construction with tassels very painstakingly cut to measure 1/16th of an inch in width and approximately six inches in length."

Lauber had not been lying when he told Kagan that he knew more than he was telling about why the RCMP was convinced the few confirmed Alberta mutilations were the work of cultists. The cap looked like some kind of ceremonial gear to be worn during a ritual. In fact, we traced its design to a variation on the traditional costume worn during the initiation rites in voodoo ceremonies. And that fit too. We reminded ourselves that the boy in *Jay's Journal* who had mutilated cattle had also been involved with an occult group that borrowed freely from voodoo. The photos made a nice connection, and even further underlined the likelihood that in many areas the few reported mutilations that may actually have been committed by humans had been done by cult groups.

Owen showed us slides of some of the reportedly mutilated animals from Benton County. As usual, there was no way to tell from the pictures whether the smooth-appearing wounds on some of them had been caused by knife cuts or predators. The one exception was the slide of the cow whose throat had been repeatedly slashed and from whose carcass no parts had been removed. There were large, deep, visible knife slashes on the animal's throat.

She showed us a photograph of the cow that Don Rystrom had claimed had broken legs. The cow was lying on its belly with its rear legs splayed out. We knew that this was not the most common position in which to find dead cattle, but it was also not so unusual that its position could be taken to mean anything. The cow looked like it had just fallen down on its face, something that could easily happen if it died from something that killed it rather quickly, such as any one of a number of common livestock ailments or natural poisons.

The next slide that flashed on the screen was the one that had caused Rystrom and some other people to start talking about spacemen and mysterious rays. It showed a calf carcass lying on its side. Seemingly rising straight out of its ribcage was a white streak, which was claimed to be a weird kind of ray, invisible to the naked eye, emanating from the carcass. It was described by the photographer who took the picture as a static spark. Summers, a professional photographer, confirmed it.

"I've been consistently amazed and disheartened," said Dr. Owen, "by the complete lack of people's ability to evaluate the information about these reports. Even the news reporters don't think carefully or do any research before they write their stories. I intend to incorporate lessons on evaluating information into all my courses from here on in. It's very important.

"I saw no connection between the reported mutilations here and the cult artifacts found here, mostly because the cult artifacts were never found at the sites of any of the mutilations," she said.

Dr. Owen talked about her involvement in writing the Rommel Report.

"I think he did a very good job as a law enforcement agent," she said. "But what he did was not what I would have done. I would have interviewed Gabe Valdez and gotten more information on his cases."

Why, we asked her, did she think Rommel had avoided interviewing Valdez?

"Well, there were rumors going around before the grant came through that Valdez was going to be named as the investigator, not Rommel. This was because he had supplied the DA with much of the initial information that the grant proposal was built around. When Rommel was hired instead there was, I think, some bad blood, so he avoided Valdez as much as he could.

"You know, when I started looking into the mutilations I thought there might be something to them. But when I saw how well Rommel's data paralleled my own, the influence of the press, the lack of consistency between the actual cases and the claims made by mutilation buffs, the way that the real information had been so badly misinterpreted by everyone, I saw that it really was almost entirely predator damage.

"My participation was also a definite move of support for Rommel's ideas. He had been reviled by the press in New Mexico because he didn't give them any information on how his investigation was progressing, and they were angry at him.

"And," she grinned, "I knew I could do a better job writing it than he could.

"I agree with Rommel's position that there's almost nothing to it but press influence and rumors. The ideas in his report are not mine, they're his. I tried to write it as he would have, using his conclusions."

We asked Owen about her own conclusions.

"First of all, all the bizarre ideas about UFOs and all are completely unsupportable. There's nothing at all behind the mythology. There may be a cult link, but I couldn't prove it.

"It's also not true that there's a large number of mutilations. There's just a large number of *reports*. They start reporting so-called unusual air traffic and things like that when all the while they're just looking at things that have always been going on, and placing them in a mysterious light because of what they've been hearing.

"I agree that the large majority of reported mutilations are really predator damage," she concluded.

"What about the veterinary reports from Dr. France and Dr. Hatfield?" we asked.

Owen made a significant observation here.

"France never knew that the horse had been castrated the day before when he necropsied it. Why didn't he know that? If he was a really good vet, if he had any understanding of pathology and had done many necropsies, he would have questioned the owner about the animal's prior condition. And he didn't. So I wonder about his conclusions."

Benton County Blues

That evening, Summers got a call from New York. He had to return the next day to take care of some pressing business. Kagan would have to complete the remainder of the trip alone.

The next day, Kagan drove to the Benton County Sheriff's Department to interview Sheriff Claude Penn and Don Harrelson, the captain of the deputies. Both these men had been Don Rystrom's superiors during his tenure at the sheriff's office and had watched over his investigation of the Arkansas mutilation wave.

Kagan was extremely wary about the kind of information he would get out of this meeting. Deputies and staff have permanent jobs, but a sheriff does not. Since he's elected, he's often worried about his job and overly suspicious of any dissension within the ranks of his own men. A county sheriff's office was a snake pit of petty Machiavellian maneuvering, often conducted on a primitive level. Men could lose their jobs or be officially censured for things that were in themselves harmless, but which might be seen by the sheriff as politically dangerous to him. Or a man might lose his job as a symbolic gesture on the part of the sheriff, who might want to demonstrate some of his political power to the other deputies or to the county at large.

This did not mean that we believed that Don Rystrom had been railroaded out of his job. There was already too much evidence that he had dribbled the mutilation issue like a basketball in Benton County for his own benefit. But Kagan wanted to give the man a fair shake. The fact that Rystrom was running against his own boss was enough to show that he had probably not had the best relationship with him when he worked for the sheriff's office. The crucial question was "Why?" There was no doubt that the publicity Rystrom had gathered as a result of his involvement in the cattle mutilation wave did not exactly hurt his chances as a political candidate.

As soon as Kagan met Sheriff Claude Penn, a large, paunchy, craggy man who was cut from the same grizzled tree trunk as Sheriff George Yarnell, of Colorado, Penn underlined the political climate of their meeting.

"I want you to understand that this is an election year," he said. "I don't want any—disturbances—that might influence the campaign."

Kagan assured him that nothing would appear in print until long after the election had been decided.

Penn spun a sheaf of papers across the desk to Kagan.

"Look at this," he said.

The letterhead on the sheet of paper at the top of the pile was from *True Detective*, a pulp magazine for police officers and crime buffs. Its articles cover criminal cases around the country, usually murders, and detail exactly how the individual officers involved solved the case. Most of *True Detective*'s articles are alike: they usually involve the murder, often with sexual assault, of an attractive woman.

The package contained a letter and a certificate of notification of an award that the magazine had presented to Don Rystrom for the work he had done on a murder case in Benton County a few years back. The case involved a young woman, Sharon Taylor, who had been raped and murdered. Nothing official, the award was just something to hang on the wall.

Sheriff Penn said, "The sheriff's department did not tell *True Detective* about this case. Rystrom did it himself. He didn't do any more than three or four other men on that case, but the article and this thing make it look like he did. He's a publicity hog. He got together with another guy from Lowell County, and they both sent in their names. That other guy didn't do anything on the case at all, and the magazine gave him an award too."

Kagan asked Penn how he had been involved with the wave of mutilations in Benton County. Penn explained that 1978, the time the wave of reports had begun, was also an election year, and that he was not even working in the Benton County Sheriff's Office. Penn had been the chief deputy for six years under the former sheriff, an older man who was planning to retire in 1978 and did not exert much authority over the functioning of the office at that time. Claude Penn, like the aide of an ailing combat general, was actually the man in charge of the sheriff's office. But he had decided to run for sheriff in 1978, and there was a law in Benton County that a candidate for the office could not be employed at the sheriff's office at the same time he was campaigning for the seat.

"So I dropped out of the chief deputy's job and went to work at the Bentonville Police Department as a criminal investigator to get around the conflict," he explained. "The sheriff was retiring that year and he had put his name in for an appointment as county judge, so there wasn't a lot of supervision around this office in 1978."

So, Kagan realized, all of Rystrom's activities during the 1978 mutilation wave had occurred at a time when authority and control of the staff at the sheriff's office were virtually nonexistent. There was no voice of moderation to question Rystrom's handling of the issue or to demand that he bolster his claims with reliable evidence. Rystrom and the cattle mutilations were pretty much out of control in 1978.

"The office of sheriff has a two-year term," Penn explained. "I ran for it in 1978, and now Rystrom is running against me in 1980." He sighed deeply.

"I only heard about these mutilation reports in 1978, from the newspapers when I was working for the Bentonville Police," he explained. Even though he was not officially working at the sheriff's office, Penn was called out on a few of the cases that Rystrom had reported.

"One sheriff's department photographer went out on all of them, but I only went on two. And I'll tell you, Rystrom never let anyone else see the evidence his claims were based on. In one of those cases, he reported a mutilation. I got a call. When I got out there, Rystrom had piled brush on top of the carcass and he was burning it. I never got a chance to inspect it to verify his claims. In the other case it was the same situation. When I got there to take a look at the animal, there was Rystrom tossing diesel fuel on a blazing carcass. I didn't get to see that one, either."

Obviously, Penn was suspicious of Rystrom's propensity for quickly destroying such bizarre evidence before anyone who might contradict his claims could see it.

A man who looked like a slightly younger, slimmer version of Claude Penn entered the office. All the senior officers at the sheriff's office looked like uncles and older first cousins to Robert Mitchum.

This man was Captain Don Harrelson, the Chief Deputy under Claude Penn, who had filled that spot when Penn left during the 1978 campaign and who still held the post. Rystrom had worked under him.

"Rystrom was assigned to the mutilation cases because he was supposed to know something about horses and cattle," Harrelson explained. "His father had owned a cattle-raising business, and he was a former jockey. He was our resident livestock expert. At that time he was a lieutenant, and the head of our Criminal Investigation Division."

"Exactly how did it all start here?" asked Kagan.

"We had that report from Pea Ridge, the horse, the first one," Harrelson explained. "Rystrom was called in on it. He failed to report either to the veterinarian who looked at it or to the sheriff's office that the animal had been castrated the day before. The papers picked it up, and the thing started to snowball. Then, what's his name, Jacques Vallee, the UFO guy, came here right afterward because he was investigating a UFO sighting up in Eureka Springs, and the papers picked up on that, and the whole thing mushroomed. The press coverage did it all.

"Then," he continued, "they found that witchcraft altar in the woods. That kept things rolling."

"I think all those altars were just a bunch of kids fooling around," said Penn.

"Most of all that devil-worship theorizing was just from Rystrom," said Harrelson. "He got all keyed up and started reading books on devil worship. He sure caught all the publicity though. When the crew from '20/20' came down here to do their interviews, they only talked to Rystrom. We didn't even find out about it until after they left."

They began talking about why Rystrom had been fired from the sheriff's office.

"There were all kinds of stupid rumors," said Harrelson. "When Rommel was here in 1979, he told us there was a rumor going around that the CIA had had something to do with Rystrom getting fired."

Kagan reflected on Rystrom's actual participation in the mutilations in Arkansas, the actual ideas he had promoted. According to all the news clips he had seen, Rystrom had never even taken a coherent stand on a particular theory. He had done the same thing Howard Burgess and Gabe Valdez had done—waffled around from UFOs to witchcraft to government plots, trying to imply that all of them were the reason for the mutes. He supported what the press needed to hear. And, like all the rest of the mutologist lawmen, he could never offer any proof to back up his ideas.

"Rystrom was fired for the illegal use of county property for personal gain," said Harrelson.

"There was no connection at all with the mutilation cases," Sheriff Penn broke in.

"Rystrom is a good boy," he said, "a good deputy. But in this case he just didn't know what was so and what wasn't."

He continued. "I had a lot of doubt about the truth in his mutilation reports. That was the biggest problem. The boy didn't know the truth about it.

"The press really went along with Rystrom," said Penn. "He was supposed to be a professional cattleman and all that. The local papers all interviewed him. His name stood out.

"None of those veterinary reports were ever officially authorized by the sheriff's office or supervised by us. They were all done through Rystrom," said Penn.

"But were there ever any actual cuts on any of the animals?" Kagan asked.

"No one will ever be able to tell," said Harrelson. "Rystrom did most of the investigation; he was the only witness. There was no one to back up his observations."

This sounded exactly like Gabe Valdez's "confirmed" mutilations up in remote Dulce, which had not been seen or confirmed by anyone except Gabe and Howard Burgess.

"We started to pay closer attention when the numbers got out of hand," Harrelson continued. "I went on a couple of mutilation calls. In one case the farmer said it was a mutilation, but when I got there, there were lots of signs that the cow had been thrashing around like it was sick. I'd seen that before. The eye was gone, but when you looked closely, you could see the birds had taken it. There was another one. When I got there, I could see right away the predators had been eating on the cow."

Kagan asked them exactly when they had started to mistrust Rystrom's reports.

"It's hard to say," Harrelson said. "But, you know, there's got to be a limit to this kind of thing. If you get sixteen calls for sixteen dead animals, it's unlikely that all sixteen would be mutilations, but that's the way it was happening after a while."

Harrelson called another deputy into the office. His name was Sergeant Lou Townshend, and he had been assigned to the mutilations about six months after Rystrom had been handling the cases alone.

"Things started to look bad when I went and asked Rystrom about details on his cases compared to mine," Townshend explained. "When I talked to the owners of the animals who had drugs in them I found that all the animals had recently been treated by a vet. Rystrom never let on about this. He always said he didn't know how the drugs got there.

"We had three cases that were obvious copycats," he continued. "All three were very small calves and they had obviously been hacked up with a butcher knife. On one of them the ear was sloppily cut, and they had tried to cut out the anus and failed. In all those cases the owners said the animals had been very sick before they were found. The owners said the lack of blood around their wounds was because they had been cut up after death. It was real simple.

"The real proof, though, is that we haven't had a single 'mutilation' in Benton County since Rystrom left the sheriff's office," said Townshend.

Another man came into the office. It was getting pretty crowded. His name was Bill Risenhoover, and he was the official photographer for the sheriff's department. He had been to all the reported mutilations and had taken all the photos Nancy Owen showed us.

He said that all the pictures had been misinterpreted.

"There was one carcass that looked burned on the slide, it was all black around the face. Some people tried to make something about that. It didn't look burned in person. I saw it. It was all black from the drying of blood and the flesh around it. You could see that at the scene," said Risenhoover.

Kagan asked him about the photo with the "ray" emanating from the carcass.

"Yeah," he said. "Rystrom said that calf had a broken neck and had been dropped from the air. That wasn't true. I took the picture on a very muggy day, the air was damp. That's the kind of weather that'll give you a static spark like that in your film. I requested that that picture not be shown at any of Rystrom's lectures. But he took it to New Mexico to show it at Senator Schmitt's conference without my knowledge. Rystrom was in his glory building this thing up. He was invited to talk to flying saucer groups, the whole thing."

Again, talk turned to local cult activities.

"I don't doubt that there's cults here," said Harrelson. "We get reports all the time. There's someone who places ads for cult meetings in the classifieds of the *Rodgers Daily News* periodically. And we once had a report of an abandoned barn out in the

country where someone found a bunch of dead chickens hanging from the rafters like they'd been sacrificed."

"Why haven't you ever mounted a full-scale investigation into this kind of stuff?" Kagan asked.

"There's such a thing as freedom of worship, you know," Harrelson said. "It's in the Constitution. You can't just investigate people because they have strange religious practices. You've got to have some kind of probable cause for criminal activity. And we never had that here."

Kagan asked Risenhoover about the black-and-white photo of the cow lying on its belly with its legs splayed out, the one Rystrom claimed had been dropped from the air and whose legs he had said were broken.

"I didn't take that picture," said Risenhoover. "Rystrom took that one himself. I never saw it, never went there. No one did, except Rystrom. I don't know if the cow might have been moved or set up or what."

Kagan asked them about reports of mysterious helicopters.

"There was only one," said Harrelson. He paused. "Rystrom reported a mysterious black chopper over his own ranch. No one else saw it."

Kagan had to leave. He was due at Don Rystrom's home.

Innocent Until Proven Guilty

Kagan drove out into the countryside of Benton County toward Don Rystrom's house. It seemed that around every bend in the road there was another small Baptist church. The Ozark hills rolled away from the yellow fields in humps of green. He kept passing political posters tacked up on trees and fence posts in the middle of the country. There were posters that said "Donald H. Rystrom for Benton County Sheriff: Dedicated to Impartial Law Enforcement For All People of Benton County," and there were posters for Claude Penn. The Rystrom posters outnumbered the Penn posters by about four or five to one.

Rystrom's farm house was right off the narrow main road. He came out into the yard to greet Kagan. He was young, in his late thirties, with longish blonde hair. Short and bulky, about five foot seven, tightly coupled and muscular, he had the same kind of physical presence and build as Gabe Valdez.

They settled themselves into Rystrom's pine-paneled living room, where almost an entire wall was covered with framed certificates of various kinds from different law enforcement training and certification programs. These programs were sponsored voluntary workshops and conventions for police officers from around the country, and if you completed their training courses, you were given an official certificate to hang on the wall.

Men who collect these things, especially men who let their fellow officers know about their ongoing program of participation in law enforcement certificate programs, often tend to generate a good deal of hostility among their working peers. Everyone knows the certificates are only honorary, and most cops consider it bad taste to display them as if they were awards. Kagan asked Rystrom about these.

"Well, I held the highest degree in Minimum Standards of anyone at the sheriff's office," Rystrom said. "That one over there is the Intermediate Certificate from the Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards. The sheriff only has the Basic Level one. And that one is from the National Commission on Professional Law Enforcement Standards. It's a certificate of professional rating. The sheriff doesn't have one of these at all."

Rystrom had a natural gift for self-promotion. He knew how to collect all the right papers from all the right organizations to make himself look good. This was bound to be resented by a bunch of good ole boys who were just out to do their deputy work and retire. Not only the sheriff, but Rystrom's fellow law enforcement officers had probably been aware of his political designs for quite a while, even before the cattle mutilation issue came up.

Kagan asked him about the *True Detective Magazine* "Distinguished Service Award." He wanted to know if Rystrom had submitted his own name for it.

"I don't know how they got hold of the story," said Rystrom. "Why don't you ask the county DA about it?"

Kagan asked him about his background.

"I was the chief investigator for the office's criminal investigation division for four years," said Rystrom. "In 1973 and 1978, I was selected as Officer of the Year by the sheriff's office."

Another resemblance to Valdez.

"You know, we had the number one department in the state for twenty years, up until Claude Penn became sheriff. Now the office isn't even in the ratings," he said. "You know, Claude was a damned good police officer, but he's been a piss-poor sheriff."

Kagan asked him exactly why he had been fired from the sheriff's office. We already knew that Rommel's report had been wrong when it had said Rystrom was fired specifically for lying on cattle mutilation reports. What exactly was the county property he had used that had gotten him canned?

Rystrom explained that, among his other achievements, he held a certificate as a qualified polygraph examiner.

"I had my own private polygraph business under the former sheriff," he explained. "I had my own polygraph machine. I had his approval. The agreement was that I would only use the polygraph on non-criminal cases, administering tests like for bonding employees and other circumstances, as long as my polygraph work didn't conflict with official police business. I had my own machine, and the county had theirs. I used mine on my private contracts.

"Early in 1978, the county's machine broke down and I used my own machine on a couple of county cases with official permission.

"Then, in early 1979, right after Claude Penn took office, I discussed my polygraph business with him. I wanted to have the same kind of official permission to run my private business as I had under the previous sheriff. Penn said it was OK as long it didn't conflict with police business.

"Then *my* instrument broke. So I used the county's instrument for some of my private work, with Penn's permission."

Here, then, was the county property Rystrom had supposedly used without permission for personal gain.

"Around February or March of 1979, Penn started calling me into his office and asking me if I was planning to run for sheriff. I told him no. This started happening about once a month. Penn kept hearing rumors and he was worried."

Kagan reflected that Penn had been right to be worried. The stink of politics was all over this case.

"A few days later, Penn called me into the office and told me he had had some complaints about my using the county instrument for private gain. He said there was going to be an official investigation of it. He was worried. The state police were going to do the investigation.

"'I can't stand an investigation,' he told me. I said, 'I have nothing to hide.'

"A couple of weeks later, in July, when the investigation was going to begin, Penn called me in and asked me to take a month off without pay during the course of the investigation. He told me it was standard procedure. I refused. I wasn't proved guilty of anything, and I wasn't about to give up a month's pay.

"I talked to an attorney, and he told me not to take that leave. A few days after that, I was called to the county prosecutor's office to be questioned about the situation. They put me in a room and asked me to waive my rights so we could talk freely about it. I refused. They stopped the meeting right there.

"When I got back to the sheriff's office later that day, Captain Harrelson came in and told me that they were terminating me from my job. I asked him why. He told me it was because I had refused to talk to the DA's prosecutor.

"I tried to fight the firing, but I couldn't. Ultimately, there never was a final, official reason for it."

He took out a letter from the DA's office and a newspaper article covering his attempts to regain his job. Kagan read them carefully. They added some confusion to Rystrom's story. Both the letter and the article indicated that any possible criminal charges were to be dropped and the investigation stopped on the condition that Rystrom pay the sheriff's office $900, to equal the money he had made by using the county's polygraph in his private business. Once the money changed hands, there would be no further investigating, but Rystrom would not be reinstated. Without saying it directly, Rystrom had made it sound as though he had been railroaded out of his job. But there were a few details that bothered Kagan. As long as he had already lost the job and had nothing to lose, why didn't he fight to the end to be vindicated? Neither Rystrom nor Penn was telling the whole truth. Kagan felt one thing was certain, though: Rystrom had made excellent use of the publicity he had received through the mute coverage in the local papers. He was a bona fide political candidate and, according to Nancy Owen, he was favored to win the election.

Kagan then began questioning Rystrom about the cattle mutilations. The first thing Rystrom did was pull out an envelope full of Tom Adams's *Stigmata* and give them to Kagan. Apparently, he had a high regard for Adams's "research," or pretended he did. Kagan waved the envelope away. He was not happy about what this opening gesture said about Rystrom's reliability.

"Tell me about *your* involvement," he asked.

"Well," said Rystrom. "You know, I was told in a roundabout way at Schmitt's Albuquerque conference that I knew too damned much about the mutilations for my own good. I was told that my files were too complete, my photographs were too good, you know."

Rystrom was playing the secret agent mutology conspiracy gambit, and Kagan was disgusted. Rystrom was running the line that he was "too close to the truth," and there was the implication that he had been "silenced" by "higher powers" that had engineered his firing from the sheriff's office. Kagan knew when he was being snowed.

"Exactly who told you that you knew too much?" Kagan wanted to know.

"Well, we had a closed meeting in a motel room in Albuquerque during the conference," Rystrom explained. "There was a group of law enforcement officers there."

"You mean a law enforcement officer said that to you?" Kagan asked.

"I—don't remember exactly who said that," he replied.

Kagan pressed him for more. "Do you remember who was there?" he asked.

"Police officers," said Rystrom, "Keith Wolverton was there, Gabe Valdez . . ."

"Who else was there?" Kagan asked. He had an idea.

"Well," Rystrom said, "the boys from *Stigmata* were there too. Tom Adams, and a couple of his people. Gary Massey, and David Perkins."

So, thought Kagan, it was not in fact a meeting of law officers as Rystrom had first said. He bade Rystrom go on with the story, already sure of its outcome.

"Well, there was a consensus in the room that there would be nothing done in terms of a large-scale investigation of the mutilations. We all felt resentment against Schmitt's idea for an FBI investigation. We felt it would end up as a cover-up. I mean, all the necropsies done by the big labs under the Feds always come up negative. And the independent lab results come up positive."

What Rystrom said was completely untrue. In fact, the seven actual confirmed cases of human-induced death and mutilation of cattle had all come out of officially involved laboratories, six from Canada and the RCMP and one from Iowa under the auspices of the State Department of Criminal Investigation.

"And then one of Adams's people, it could have been Massey or Perkins, said that he thought I knew too much about the mutilations and might be censored in some way," he said. Rystrom did not appear to like saying this. Kagan kept his face blank as Rystrom continued to play out the conspiracy pressure game.

"Rommel came to Arkansas to Kready's conference in the summer of 1979, just as the polygraph investigation was coming to a head. I think he mixed into it and had something to do with my getting fired."

Rystrom returned again to the subject of Senator Schmitt's Albuquerque conference. The meeting had obviously been some kind of high point for him.

"You know, Gabe Valdez said the mutes stopped at Dulce right after that conference. They stopped here, too, at the same time." The implication was that once "they" got wind that all the beleaguered lawmen had come together at the Schmitt conference, "they" curtailed their mutilations, possibly to embarrass those, like Rystrom, who were claiming loudly that there was a real mutilation problem. The logic was unbelievable. It admitted no hint that any of them—Valdez, Rystrom, Adams—might be on the wrong track.

Kagan asked him about how he had come to bring the first reported mutilation, the horse, to the particular attention of Dr. Gary France.

"I've known Gary personally for years," he said. "We used to ride my daddy's racehorse together when we were kids."

Rystrom explained that he and France had been "appalled" by the experiment done by the Washington County Sheriff's Office, in which they had euthanized a calf, observed while it was taken apart by predators, and then noted how the damage was exactly the same as what was being reported as surgical mutilations.

"That experiment was a crock of shit," he said. "They never did sit there and watch the predators and scavengers work. They left the animal for twenty-four hours and came back." He paused.

"But I agree that it was predators that damaged that animal. But it's not a true experiment." Unfortunately, Rystrom was not able to explain exactly why, or what his idea of a true experiment would be.

Two young kids ran into the living room. They were Rystrom's. Both of them were wearing "Rystrom for Sheriff" T-shirts.

Kagan was willing to bet that Claude Penn had not thought about making up T-shirts. Kagan had a feeling that Claude Penn was going to lose this election.

There was good reason to believe that, even though Rystrom might have deserved to be fired, Penn may well have been trying to neutralize Rystrom as a candidate by dirtying his name in a small scandal. There was also the possibility that Rystrom's involvement in the mutes and the attention he received might have been coincidental, but it was also a real good way for a man who had had designs on the sheriff's office to take attention away from the 1978 election and focus it on himself, grabbing some local recognition that he could use later on. There was too much political poker being played in Benton County for us to believe either one fully. The cattle mutilations seemed almost incidental.

The Sergeant Crossed

That night, from his hotel room phone, Kagan was able to reach Sergeant Doug Fogley of the Arkansas State Police. Fogley couldn't make time to meet with him during the twenty-four more hours Kagan would be in Arkansas, so they had their meeting over the telephone.

Fogley had a deep, booming Southern drawl and liked to make deadpan jokes. His style was friendly and solicitious, and he spoke freely. He backed up everything Kagan had been told by Rystrom and the sheriff's office and Nancy Owen about his involvement in the Arkansas mutilations.

"I work this area naturally," he explained. "It's part of my territory. In cases like this one the state police function like the CBI does, as an assistive agency for the local sheriffs. I really knew nothing about it when I got involved; I kind of backed into it. I collected Rystrom's reports and dictated them into my files. I never was actually invited to a reported mutilation scene, I just got all the information after the fact. They'd call me and say 'We had another one.' The sheriff's office assigned Rystrom to it full-time, and I just took his word totally about everything that was happening."

When Senator Schmitt's Albuquerque conference came up in 1979, Rystrom wanted to attend with Fogley. The Benton County Sheriff's Office would not put up the traveling money, so Fogley arranged for the state police to pay their way.

"I was at that closed afternoon session that was for law enforcement people only. I talked to some of the people there. Carl Whiteside was very objective, and Gabe Valdez was fanatically opposite of him. Rommel was there. He was very reserved, didn't say much,'' said Fogley.

''I liked Valdez,'' he continued. ''He's a good cop, but I think he's ready for the rubber gun squad over this cattle mutilation thing.

''By August of 1979, the press in Arkansas had gotten really bad,'' Fogley explained. ''By that time I had already decided that the whole thing was a crock of shit. I made speeches to some groups to try to tell them there was nothing to these reports. I told the counties that they weren't justified in spending any money investigating this thing. I had been to see reported mutilations in other counties, and it was real obvious that it was all due to buzzards and predators. Meanwhile, Rystrom was running around trying to counter me, maintaining that maybe all the other mutilations might turn out to be predators, but the ones he had seen in Benton County were the only real classic mutilations in the state.'' Fogley laughed. ''See, it sounded like only Rystrom got to go to the classic mutes. Me and everyone else had predator damage.''

This sure sounded like the way that no one but Gabe Valdez ever found strange tripod tracks in New Mexico.

''It was me and Herb Marshall, the sheriff of Washington County, who came up with the idea of that calf experiment back in June of 1979, the one where we ended up killing the calf and then watching how the predators tore it apart until it looked exactly like a 'mutilation.' We finally did the experiment in September of '79. We even took photos of the animal and compared them to Rystrom's pictures of what he said were mutilations. They looked exactly the same.

''We made it our business to funnel the results of that experiment to the newspapers. The *Democrat* picked it up and ran that long article about it with a headline something like ''Police Watch Cattle Mutilation.'' And ever since it came out, since October of 1979, we have not had a single cattle mutilation report. It ended the mutilations in Arkansas.''

Kagan asked him exactly when he had started to become doubtful about the reliability of Rystrom's information.

''Well,'' said Fogley, ''we started to get suspicious after the Schmitt conference in April of 1979. Rystrom was still reporting mutilations, but somehow the state cops were never asked to come to the scene. No one but him ever got to see these damned things.

''You know, when a cop tells another cop something, he'll generally believe it, so we believed Rystrom until it got hard to continue. Rystrom said that the picture of the calf with the light ray on it wasn't the only one. He said that ray showed up on other pictures of the animal. But I talked to Risenhoover, and he told me it had only showed up in the one shot. And I found out that Rystrom had never mentioned to anyone that the first animal, that horse, was castrated the day before by the owner. He knew it but never told anyone. There was also that case where Rystrom said all four legs of that cow were broken. No one else ever saw that cow. He had no evidence, there were no other witnesses. I showed the picture to a vet, and he said the animal probably just squatted down that way to die.

''I'll tell you, the average vet down here, he'll give you a classic mutilation if you want one, he'll tell you what you want to hear.''

''Was Rystrom aware of your position on all this?'' Kagan asked.

''I think he became aware only after I lost interest in following it. At Kready's conference in Little Rock in August of 1979, I went and put on Rystrom's slide show. I said, 'This is what Benton County has reported, so-called mutilations,' and like that. Rommel was there. We went out to dinner. We did some serious drinking and started to talk about what we both really thought. I had been doubtful about all this from the beginning. Rommel said 'That classic mute stuff is horseshit. The whole thing is due to the media coverage. Those scare headlines are the worst enemy we have,' he said.

''Then Herb Marshall and I did that experiment with the calf. I went back to the October, 1979, conference in Little Rock and showed the slides again, but this time I explained how it was predators.''

Kagan asked Fogley what he thought of the three drugs that had been found in the three Arkansas animals that had been reportedly mutilated.

''As far as I understood, none of the findings was positive. I thought they were all probables,'' he said.

''What about cults being involved in it?'' Kagan asked.

''Well, whenever anything strange like this is reported, the first theory everyone comes up with is cults. What happens then is that you get hundreds of informants coming out of the woodwork.

"We do know that there are cults operating in Arkansas. They're screwballs. In fact, the state police are aware of certain cultists who do use animal parts in their rituals. They may be an offshoot of Anton Levay's Satanic Church in L.A., but none of these groups has presented the state police with any problems."

"What about the stone altars that were found in Bentonville?" Kagan asked.

"I worked with Dr. Rose and Dr. Owen on that," he said. "They were not connected with the mutilations. The only case we had any leads on was the one where the cow's throat was slashed, but that was a copycat. The owner saw an old pickup truck pulling away from the site. I went there and talked to him myself. Rystrom never asked me to come into it." He paused.

"Rystrom really enjoyed seeing his name in the papers. He's basically a good cop, but he actually believes all the shit he puts out. He tells people he's been to Viet Nam, but I know that he's never been out of the country."

Kagan asked him, finally, if he thought that there had been *any* mutilations in Arkansas at all.

"Yes," said Fogley. "I think there were a few deliberate cases *after* the papers made a big splash. Upwards of ninety-five percent of the cases were natural death and predator and scavenger damage. It's possible that some of the incidents were done by people, possibly cult groups, possibly copycats, but either way it was a case where someone saw the stories in the papers and wanted to get on the bandwagon." He chuckled.

"Gabe Valdez is really pissed off at me," he said. "He believes in the CIA connection in this thing. I think he's afraid it will hurt his career."

Then Fogley said something about Rystrom's having been dismissed from the sheriff's department. Kagan told him the story Rystrom had told him, about the two polygraph machines.

"There never were two machines," said Fogley, chuckling. "Rystrom never owned one. He had *always* used the county's polygraph for his private work. The former sheriff *thought* there were two machines because he never checked into it. He believed Rystrom.

"In the official state police report on the investigation, the State asked Rystrom to produce his machine. He couldn't do it.

That was when he suddenly offered to make restitution to the county for his use of the county's machine. He did that because he had been using county property all along for his own benefit."

O.S.U., D.V.M., Times Two

Early the next morning, Kagan drove to Pea Ridge to meet Dr. Gary France, the veterinarian who had necropsied the first reported mutilation in Benton County.

France turned out to be young, in his early thirties. He had the look of a cowboy—lean, stringy, with a long, droopy moustache. He had been in practice for seven years and had taken his D.V.M. from Oklahoma State University, which explained why the tissue samples he had taken from the reported mutilations had been sent there for analysis.

France talked about how he had become involved with the cattle mutilations through the first case, the horse reported in April of 1978.

"I was called to look at it," he said. "It had been reported by Francis MacNelly. It was lying on its side when I got there. I lifted up the leg and looked at the belly, and I could tell immediately that it wasn't predators. I necropsied it right on the site. Rystrom and one or two other officers were there. My wife was there too. I opened it right up. The most striking thing was the apparently surgical removal of the flesh and the sex organs.

"The horse was dead no more than twelve hours. There was no blood in the incision or on the ground. I thought it was unusual; there should have been more blood. I couldn't figure out what would cause this until I opened the abdominal cavity and found that it was filled with blood, about four gallons of it. What happened was that when the horse's testicles were removed, the spermatic cords had retracted into the abdominal cavity and kept bleeding, and the blood all ended up in there. The animal died from a massive internal hemorrhage."

Kagan asked France if he had been told at that time that the horse had been castrated by the owner the day before, and that that had likely accounted for at least the missing testicles and the fact that the horse had bled to death internally.

"I never was told. No one said anything about it," he answered.

But Rystrom had certainly known this at the time, because in his police report he had specifically noted that the horse was a gelding and had been castrated by the owner the morning before it was found. Yet France's own veterinary report referred to the horse as a *stud*, meaning that he was under the impression that until it was taken apart in this fashion, it had had its testicles.

Why hadn't Rystrom told France this? It made all the difference in the world. It explained perfectly why the testicles were missing and also how and why the horse had bled to death internally.

Kagan asked France why he didn't spot the damage on the horse as a castration as soon as he looked at it.

"There's no reason to take off all that belly skin, and you don't remove the penis, either," he said. "It looked to me like all the cutting was done at the same time. It didn't look like a standard castration.

"The damage on that horse was definitely not predators. They couldn't make an incision like that. The skin and muscle was taken, but the subcutaneous fat was left intact. It was not cut through into the viscera."

France explained that he had taken samples of the blood and the liver and sent them to OSU for analysis.

"Why did you even bother to take the samples?" Kagan asked.

"The samples were Rystrom's idea, not mine," he said. "He told me he wanted to have them tested for something that could have been used to anesthetize the horse."

Kagan found this intriguing. In almost all instances where there had been waves of reported cattle mutilations; the very first cases were not analyzed very closely. Yet in this case Rystrom had treated the cases supiciously right from the beginning. It was as if he had already known about animal mutilations, had been primed for them, and had immediately begun following the procedures that would be followed by someone who was ready to look for suspicious signs. Kagan felt that Rystrom had not told him the truth when he said he had never known about mutilations before the first incident. Nancy Owen had found that the man who reported the horse, Francis MacNelly, knew about mutes long before he reported the horse as a mutilation.

"We found some hoofprints that looked like the horse had stumbled, like it had been drugged and put down," said France.

France was referring to the OSU report that had come back positive for succinylcholine, and he was inclined to believe, along with Rystrom, that someone had intentionally killed the horse with a dose of succinylcholine in order to mutilate it. Kagan was confused by France's conclusion. He was suddenly ignoring the fact that the horse had been castrated the day before and that the gross and obvious cause of death was that it had bled to death internally and slowly through its severed and retracted spermatic cords. The horse's weakened condition from blood loss would also account for its having stumbled before it fell over.

Here were two supposed professionals, a veterinarian and a police officer, whose work entailed the ability to assemble the diagnostic elements of a mystery and come up with a logical explanation. Yet here was Dr. France now saying that he thought that the horse had been killed by a drug overdose just before it went down. He was contradicting himself.

It was amazing that he had not seen that in all likelihood, the presence of the succinylcholine in the horse's blood was incidental to its demise. It had probably been administered by the owner to facilitate the castration the morning before and a trace still remained in its blood. Everything about the animal's death was easily explainable, except for the extensiveness of the incision. It was clear that, although Dr. France might be an excellent veterinarian, he was no pathologist, and no coroner. But Kagan still wondered about the extent of the cutting on the horse's belly.

"The cutting on that animal looked like the work of someone skillful," France said. "I would say it was dissected rather than butchered. It was pretty neat. But whatever skill was necessary was not beyond being learned by anyone who wanted to do it. It would require some skill, but there was nothing superhuman about it."

Given that the owner had done the castration the day before and had administered the drug that was found in the horse, these factors accounted for the horse's death by internal bleeding, the drug trace, and also at least part of the surgical damage. The farmer himself could have caused the surgical damage under the impression that it was necessary in order to castrate the animal. People routinely do even stupider things.

Another possibility was that the horse had died and been attacked by scavengers, and that the extensive belly damage was the work of birds' beaks or the sharp teeth of small predators and France had simply not observed it carefully enough. He had not submitted samples of the wound edges to the OSU lab for microscopic analysis. Another possibility was that the horse had been castrated, had bled to death, and after it was down, someone, possibly a cultist or a prankster, had come along and sliced it up for his own reasons.

Rystrom's police report revealed that the neighbors in the area had reported hearing several loud motorcycles running up and down the county road all night on the night the horse had died. Another neighbor had reported that an old pickup truck with loud pipes or no muffler had pulled into her driveway and sat there a few minutes, right in the spot where the horse usually stood at night. This lent some weight to the possibility that *if* the horse had been cut by someone, it could well have been cultists or pranksters.

And there was a third possibility. It turned out that the man who castrated the horse was not its owner. The horse was owned by the man's brother. It was not impossible that the man had castrated the horse, and the horse had died through his negligent performance of the surgery, and that, in order not to be blamed by his brother for the loss of the animal, he, himself, had cut the belly and removed the penis to throw suspicion off himself and onto some mysterious horse mutilator. No matter which explanation was acceptable, it was clear in this case that there was no involvement of flying saucers or government experimenters. There were too many solid leads pointing in the direction of more mundane explanations.

"After it hit the newspapers, the phone rang for about six weeks," France said. "All kinds of people called me."

He then spoke about the other two reported mutilations he had examined for Rystrom.

The second reported mutilation he had seen was a calf that was brought into the clinic in June of 1978. Unfortunately, there were no written reports on this animal's condition. The owner had brought the calf in after he had reported it to the sheriff's office and Don Rystrom had come to examine it. Referring to Rystrom's police report on the animal, Kagan noted that in it the damage to the animal was described as "surgical," yet Rystrom had made this judgment on the site *without* the benefit of any qualified help to ascertain that this damage was in fact surgical: Rystrom's conclusion had been reached before Dr. France examined the carcass.

Dr. France, however, had seconded this belief during his necropsy.

"The eye was missing, the tongue was gone, and the anus and testicles were gone," he said. "There was a circular incision around the perineal area that looked very precise and clean," he said. According to the rancher, the animal had been dead less than four hours. Rystrom and the rancher said there was no blood found at the scene, and I noticed that the wounds were remarkably clear of blood. I opened up the animal and didn't find much blood in the abdominal cavity or the heart. It was kind of unusual."

"Do you think the animal was intentionally bled out by someone?" Kagan asked.

"No. I don't think the blood was pumped out or anything like that. It could have oozed out the eye incision. But the rancher said there was no blood at the site. I could never determine the cause of death, but I would *not* say that the animal was killed by exsanguination. It would be impossible to prove based on the evidence I saw. Also, I didn't find anything that looked like needle marks."

There were some gaping holes in this story. France said that he did not think the animal had died from exsanguination. Yet Rystrom's police report clearly stated that he said France told him the animal *had* died from being bled to death. And France's own recollection of the case indicated that the one clue necessary to point toward intentional draining of the animal's blood, needle marks, was conspicuously absent. This led Kagan to conclude that France had probably never told Rystrom that the animal had died from exsanguination. There was a suspicious lack of consistency to the stories here. Although Kagan was sure that France was a competent veterinarian, he seemed to have almost no pathology technique. No matter how strongly he believed his own findings, they were too haphazard to be acceptable as reliable.

The third case France had examined was a reportedly mutilated cow which had been investigated not by Don Rystrom but by Sergeant Don Townshend, whom Kagan had met at the sheriff's office and who had expressed skepticism that there was anything to the mutilations.

"That one was dead the longest of the ones I saw," he said. "It was dead at least twenty-four hours. It also had the worst incision I saw on all three, rough edges, and stroke marks all over it. Everything missing was from the rear end, the rectum, the vulva, vagina, uterus, and most of the tail and urinary bladder were gone. The deputy told me there was no blood at the site, but there was blood in that cow, it was not bled dry. But the wounds were clean of blood. I found a spot on the right rear when I skinned the carcass, a bruise that could have been a needle mark. I would say it was cut, but it was a sloppy job.''

Kagan called France's attention to some comments he had made in his written report. France had written that a portion of the small intestine and a part of the large intestine appeared to have been burned.

''I said 'burned' strictly on the appearance,'' he said. ''There were dark, grayish-black stains on those organs, but there was no burn smell, and you'd expect some kind of odor. I'm not sure if they actually were burns. The only unusual thing was that there was no spillage of fecal matter from the intestines into the abdominal cavity. You'd expect that with those kind of cuts. All I can really say is that I definitely don't think it was predators or scavengers that did the damage to that animal.''

''What do you think could explain the lack of blood around the wounds on these three animals?'' Kagan asked.

''Well,'' said France, ''I would say that either it means the animals were cut after death, or they were exsanguinated first, and then cut. Except for the horse. The horse had all that internal bleeding, so you wouldn't expect any blood around the wounds.''

Kagan asked France about the availability of succinylcholine.

''I'm not sure it would be that hard to get,'' he said. ''You could probably steal it from a vet, or buy it in powder form from a chemical supply house. I've heard that hunters will use the powder to make a solution to tip their arrows with when they hunt deer. I sure wouldn't sell it to anyone.''

''What do you think about all this?'' Kagan asked him.

''I think there's something to it. I think some individuals may have done a few of these things for some reason, possibly cults. There are some strange aspects to it, but I'll tell you one thing: it's definitely not flying saucers. There's nothing supernatural about it. And I know that most of the reported mutilations were really animals that died from natural causes and were chewed up by predators. My three were cut, though, I'm sure.

''Jacques Vallee was up here in 1978. He seemed to think it was connected to flying saucers. I could never buy any of that.''

Following the notion that perhaps some of the Arkansas mutilations might have been committed by cultists with tranquilizer dart guns, Kagan asked France how easy it was to get one. France laughed.

''I got mine through the mail from Palmer Chemical, down in Georgia or Alabama. The ad said 'No excess paperwork,' meaning the guy who was selling them didn't want to be bothered selling to any government institutions. There are no hard and fast standards. I think almost anyone can get one.''

Next, Kagan drove to the other side of Bentonville to meet with Dr. Charles Hatfield, the other veterinarian who had examined reportedly mutilated animals for the sheriff's department.

As he sat in the waiting room, he chatted with the doctor's receptionist about the mute wave.

''Most people around here were pretty skeptical,'' she said. ''A lot of them thought it was cults because of the altars found around here. Dr. Hatfield got a lot of calls from people after the papers mentioned his name.''

Kagan asked her if the doctor's practice required him to do a lot of work with cattle and horses.

''Oh, no,'' she said. ''He handles mostly pets, dogs and cats, almost no farm animals.''

Hatfield was seated at a large wooden desk with a wall of bookshelves behind him. His office looked more like that of a doctor for humans than for animals. He was casually dressed, but not in work clothes. Hatfield also was young. He told Kagan he had been practicing since 1972, and had graduated from Oklahoma State University, as had Gary France.

''Oh, yeah, Gary was a year behind me at vet school,'' he said. The two had known each other for quite a while. Kagan asked him how he had become involved in the mutilation cases.

''I had asked the sheriff's office to call me. I had expressed interest in seeing one of these animals.

''I wish I had been able to see fresher animals. The ones I saw were pretty old, and it's difficult enough to tell anything on them when they're fresh.''

Kagan made a mental note of this comment. The fact that the animals were not fresh meant that any findings here were seriously questionable.

The first animal Hatfield examined had, according to the sheriff's report and Hatfield's recollection, been dead at least thirty-six hours when it was found. This, of course, made any gross pathology observations almost beside the point.

"The animal was bloated and starting to decompose internally," said Hatfield.

And there goes the "embalmed carcass" theory, thought Kagan.

According to Dr. Hatfield's report, the animal, a bull, had been missing its left eye ("That was the up side eye," he told Kagan), the outer two-thirds of its tongue, the rectum, and the testicles.

"I saw immediately that it was not the usual predator damage," said Hatfield. "There was a degree of skill; it was surgery, not butchery or tearing. It could have been buzzards if the eye was the only thing gone, but the rest of the damage was very, very neat.

"There was no blood at the scene or on the wounds. I opened the animal up and there was no blood inside. I opened the whole carcass. There was no pooling. I found this very unusual. All I was able to collect was twenty-five cc of pink-tinged pericardial fluid from the sac around the heart, and about eight cc of clotted blood from the right atrium of the heart. That's all there was."

This aspect of Hatfield's examination was the one that had caused the most interest among mutologists and others. Even Dave Marash had mentioned this to us. He had interviewed Hatfield, and the detail had stuck in his mind, primarily because of to what the doctor had attributed his inability to locate any quantities of blood in the carcass.

"I went looking for clotted blood for the lab sample," he said. "I simply couldn't find any. The ventricles of the heart were clean, almost as if they had been hosed out. The heart lining is usually full of clotted blood, but there it was perfectly clean, like in anatomy class. The only way to do this would be to flush the blood out with a saline solution or something. Even if you cut the throat and hung it upside down it wouldn't empty out this completely.

"There was no clotted blood in the major arteries, either. And these vessels were not collapsed, they were fully open. I cut through the brachial artery [under the foreleg] and it was like cutting a water hose; it was empty, hollow, uncollapsed, with no clots in it, no fluid, nothing.

"If you bled an animal out with a vacuum pump, the vessels would collapse halfway through. These vessels were not collapsed, so that's why I think someone pumped saline in to keep the vessels open while the blood was being taken out."

This single observation, coupled with Hatfield's notions about exactly how the animal had been bled without collapsing its arteries, had caused quite a stir in the mutology network. It was seen by many people as proof that the animal had been exsanguinated by this method, proof that there was someone sophisticated mutilating cattle.

Hatfield said he had also found a spot over the jugular area that looked like a needle mark. "But the animal was too far gone to really tell," he said.

Hatfield then began to talk about something else he had noted in his report.

"I found this white-and-brown dried substance on the hair of the carcass. It looked like plaster of Paris, and looked like it had been dripped on the carcass after it was down. About a hundred feet from the calf, I found a twelve-foot circle of the same stuff all over some leaves and splashed on some tree trunks. It looked like bird droppings, but it wasn't. It was brittle, like chalk."

Hatfield had sent a sample of this material along with the pericardial blood sample to the lab at Oklahoma State University. The lab results had come back showing that there was mescaline in the pericardial fluid. The report had also said, "The white powder was confirmed to consist primarily of calcium sulfate, found in gypsum and plaster of Paris."

These results had led Dr. Hatfield and law enforcement people in Benton County to conclude that the animal had been given mescaline during a cult rite, had been knocked down with a tranquilizer, exsanguinated, and then mutilated. The assumption was that the organs were then mounted in plaster of Paris for some reason, and that that was why the white chalky substance had been found there. It all made sense, until you began to ask some questions and you started thinking about simple explanations.

"Could that chalky stuff have been buzzard shit? Do you know if calcium sulfate is in buzzard shit?" Kagan asked the doctor.

"Well, this stuff broke like plaster. Buzzard shit *bends*," said the doctor.

We later checked with the Ornithology Research Laboratory at Cornell University about the white chalky substance, because OSU had never checked the obvious: was calcium sulfate also found in buzzard and other predator bird droppings? At Cornell is a man named Dr. Tom Cade, widely known as an expert on birds of prey. As soon as we mentioned our question about calcium sulfate to his assistant, Phyllis Dague, she immediately said, "Of course, yes, calcium sulfate is definitely in their droppings. It forms a very chalky, hard substance when it dries."

Once again, we were amazed. The fact that calcium sulfate is a major constituent in buzzard and other bird droppings meant the odds were that the "mysterious" chalky substance Hatfield had found was in fact bird droppings. This, in turn, indicated that all the supposedly surgical damage was probably done by the sharp-beaked birds which had obviously been all over this carcass.

Hatfield mentioned that there were no tracks or signs of struggle around the animal.

"But," he said, "the ground was much too dry to take any footprints. And there was no sign of struggle, like there usually is when an animal dies.

"This one looked like it had just keeled over as if struck by lightning. But this wasn't lightning," said the doctor.

But there was nothing unusual about an animal falling over with no signs of struggle. So Hatfield was implying that the lack of struggle signs was unusual when in fact it was not.

Kagan asked Hatfield about the finding for mescaline in the OSU lab report. This was the one element in the case that was difficult to explain.

"Do you think that finding could have been an error?" Kagan asked. "After all, mescaline is an alkaloid, and there are lots of alkaloids with similar chemical structures that are found in many common plants, including some that are poisonous and might even have killed that animal."

"Yeah," said the doctor. "I thought about that. It's definitely possible that the lab could have misidentified some other alkaloid as mescaline. I wouldn't hang my hat on that lab finding. Especially given the quality of the specimen I sent them—it was a very small amount, and it was old, partially decomposed. The finding could easily have been an error."

Kagan asked him about the second animal he had examined, and was amazed to hear that the cow had been dead for a week, yet Hatfield had gone ahead and made definitive statements about it. He also had not done the simple microscopic examination of the wound edges that was necessary to determine whether or not the animal had actually been predator-damaged or surgically cut. Hatfield had proven nothing.

The doctor had sent specimens from this animal to the lab at OSU for analysis. The results had come back indicating *possible* residues for a substance called Santonin, which was an old-style worming agent that used to be used by ranchers, but that was so poisonous that it was abandoned years ago. The lab's letter also noted that Santonin was made from the flowerheads of common plants of the genus *Artemisia*, two of whose common representatives were wormwood and sagebrush. So the Santonin-like residue found in the animal's blood could have come from poisonous plants containing it. The lab's letter also pointed out that Santonin poisoning followed a progression of convulsions, coma, and death.

We checked with the Cooperative Extension Service, the Botany Department, and the Plant Pathology Department of the University of Arkansas to see if sagebrush, wormwood, or any other Santonin-producing poisonous plants grew in Arkansas and were available for forage to cattle. One of the staff horticulturists told us that sagebrush grew freely in Arkansas.

But neither Dr. Hatfield nor the investigating deputy, Don Townshend, had even considered a natural cause in the death of the animal, so they completely missed this connection.

Kagan asked him about cults.

"I can't help but believe that whoever was doing it was part of a cult." He paused.

"You know, we had a strange situation that summer, 1978, come to think of it. My wife's friend's little sister stayed with us that summer. She went to the university at Fayetteville. She was involved with some kind of cult there. It was all women. For her initiation, she was tied face down in a cave all night. She sure didn't like to talk about that group. She was very nervous about it. I heard later that she had quit the group and gone back home to San Francisco, and that she had run into some people from that cult and it scared the hell out of her. She had a breakdown and tried to commit suicide. She had to be hospitalized."

Shades of *Jay's Journal*.

9

Iowa

The Letter . . . And The Letter

Agent Joe Motsinger of the Iowa State Department of Criminal Investigation was a double threat: he had an honest-to-goodness cattle mutilation, verified by a bona fide veterinary pathologist, and he was going to talk about it. So was the pathologist, Dr. John Andrews. Motsinger had already sent us the lab analysis on the calf, and he had hinted over the phone that he might have some real eye-opening information for us when we got to Des Moines.

We already knew that the DCI had some leads on local cult groups that they thought were responsible. There were no intimations about UFOs or government conspiracies.

The Division of Criminal Investigation was in a large, modern administrative center that was the central headquarters for all the divisions of the Iowa State Department of Public Safety. The reception desk of the DCI was directly in front of the glass entrance doors to a huge room, half a floor of the large building, which was one of those open-office spaces, a forest of cubicles and desks. The air hummed with the sounds of typewriters and telephones. Joe Motsinger emerged from this maze. He was in his middle thirties, clean-cut, and had the aura of an ex-military man. He looked like a cop, but his manner was low-keyed and warm, as it had always been over the phone.

Motsinger had first encountered cattle mutilations back in 1975, but not in an official capacity.

"In 1975 I came home from the Marines," he explained. "I was staying with my family in Missouri. My brother-in-law had reported one of his animals as a mutilation."

Motsinger hadn't given much thought to it at the time. In 1976 he went to work for the Iowa DCI. In September of 1979, the first of the recent reports of mutilated cattle had come in, and

Motsinger had volunteered for the case because of his brush with mutes in Missouri several years before. He was curious about them.

"One of the first things I did was call Steve Watts in Idaho, and he put me on to cults." Watts was the investigator for the Idaho Department of Criminal Investigation who we had heard had actually cracked the few mutilations reported out there in 1975 and 1976, linking them to a local cult group.

"He did say he'd solved it," Motsinger explained. "He tracked it to cults, through informants. As soon as his findings hit the media out there, the mutilation reports stopped. He was never able to make an arrest, though."

The 1979 Iowa cases had had national publicity when *Newsweek* ran the story about them in its January 21, 1980, issue. According to the story, the reaction to the local media coverage given the reports had caused an upsurge of the same pattern that always developed in places where the mute phenomenon made itself felt. But in this instance the DCI had had cult leads right from the start, and they had some real evidence to back up that approach. Houses had been found in the areas where the mutilations had been reported, covered with occult and Satanic symbols. There were informants. Unfortunately, until May of 1980 none of the reportedly mutilated animals had been examined and confirmed by a veterinary pathologist, so there was a good deal of doubt about whether all the reported mutilations were real or mistaken predator damage. Apparently, though, between the low number of reports (only five from September 1979 through the end of the year) and the cult leads, the DCI was fairly sure they were investigating a real occurrence, not the phantom results of a wave of hysteria.

The case had become much more complicated when the DCI investigators had gone to the Public Library in Des Moines to do some research on occult practices involving animal sacrifice. When they got there, they found that almost all the books on occult practice and witchcraft, especially those books that had information about animal sacrifice, had been checked out. Thinking this might be an opportunity to make some progress in their investigation, the DCI had asked the library to supply them with the names of the people who had taken out the books. The Department wanted to question those people. The Library director refused to give out the information.

"We got a court order for their records, and the Library

Association went to the ACLU, and they filed suits against us. The press really jumped on this, and that was how we ended up in *Newsweek*."

It turned out that the DCI hadn't really needed the names after all.

"We had some informants who led us right to the people who had checked out the books," Motsinger said. "Actually, the press coverage of that library business hurt us, because it stopped that avenue of investigation, but the publicity helped us, because people started calling in, and the information began flowing."

Meanwhile, the reports of mutilated animals had been continuing at a very leisurely pace. Altogether, there had been only nine reported incidents between September of 1979 and August of 1980.

"Out of the first seven," said Motsinger, "only two were inspected by veterinarians, and the vets said they thought those were cut with knives, but they were never properly examined by the pathology lab at Iowa State University."

Finally, the calf that had been found on May 11, 1980, had been brought to the ISU lab, necropsied by Dr. Andrews, and confirmed, through the course of many tests and observations, as having been killed on purpose and mutilated with a sharp instrument.

Motsinger said, "I think I may be due for a couple of more mutes around Halloween, if you know what I mean."

He explained that he had never seen a freshly reported animal that had been claimed to be mutilated.

"The only ones I saw at the scene were too far decomposed to tell," he explained.

The original investigative work on all the cases had been done by local law enforcement officers, and Motsinger expressed an opinion about this that was similar to those of Carl Whiteside and Doug Fogley: the local cops might be good cops, but they did not have the kind of training to make accurate judgments about the condition of these animals, and they were also not well-enough trained to properly examine the scenes for evidence.

"The press coverage on these reports was inconsistent," he explained. There had been no sustained barrage of articles and commentary. "The coverage would die out after a day or two, and only crop up again when there was another report."

Interestingly, the one case which had actually been confirmed, the May 11 Keota calf, had been given no press coverage at all.

But in the atmosphere of mutilation reports, the predictable results had manifested themselves.

"The local call-in radio shows started using the subject, and there were some witches interviewed on TV," Motsinger said.

The article in *Newsweek* had less of an effect than Motsinger had anticipated.

"We did get calls from Tom Adams and Howard Burgess, but also from Steve Watts, Lynn Lauber up in Canada, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, and from Ken Rommel."

Kagan asked him his opinion about Rommel's report.

"Well, I don't agree fully with him. I might have, if I hadn't had this animal confirmed for me. I've got a vet pathologist telling me different from what Rommel said."

Motsinger pulled out a stack of files on his investigation. He explained that his agency had found the two abandoned farm houses covered with occult and Satanic symbols in November and December of 1979.

"We were looking for some cult connections to this thing. We put the word out to all the local sheriffs to keep aware of any leads." One of the houses had been found by a county sheriff's department, and Motsinger had found the other himself on a tip from a sheriff. He showed Kagan a collection of photographs taken of these two houses.

The photos of the first house showed a chalk pentagram inside a circle drawn on the floor. The walls were covered with other chalked symbols, some inverted crucifixes, and letters that looked like the Greek alphabet, along with signs that resembled old alchemical and astrological symbols. All this was appropriate for a hybrid black magic cult which had drawn on elements from ceremonial magic, traditional witchcraft, and Satanism to form whatever its rituals were. Sitting in one of the triangular spaces of the pentagram on the floor was an animal skull. It did not look like a cow skull, more like the skull of a large dog.

The photos from the second house were more revealing. On the wall had been drawn many of the same Greek symbols as in the first house. In fact, when Kagan put one set of photos next to the other, it seemed that the symbols had been made by the same hand. There were more inverted crucifixes drawn on the walls, but there were also statements in English. They read: "Hell"; "Devil Son Was Here"; "Death"; "The Devil is You and I"; "Hell Fire"; "Satan"; and "Evil Lives."

There was also a makeshift altar made from an old wooden box. On the altar were two animal skulls: one from a dog, and one from a calf. The calf skull had a blood-red candle melted onto its crown. It was clear why Motsinger thought there might be some connection. So far, though, the houses had yielded no further leads.

"We have identified a suspect in connection with both those houses," Motsinger explained, "but he hasn't been arrested. We don't have enough to go to court with, and we have no connection between this guy and the mutilations. He's very weird. He idolizes Charles Manson, that type. We can't tail him every day, so we do the best we can."

Kagan asked him about the status of the informants who had contacted him.

"Well, our current informant used to be a Satanist, but he quit the group. Now he's a born-again Christian. He's scared shitless. He told his minister that he had done a cattle mutilation with this cult. I'm still waiting to hear from the guy. The same minister said he ran into another born-again Christian who was an ex-cultist and also claimed to have done a cattle mutilation. This guy also said that human mutilations were next. But the minister had forgotten the guy's name.

"Then, we had a tape of a radio talk show. Someone called up and spoke about cults. The guy called and offered to introduce me to a coven that was into cattle mutilation. We thought we would have it cracked right then. This was back in December of last year. I tried to keep in touch with him, but he never returned my calls.

"Last week we picked up two new leads. One guy, involved with a cult group, said he was invited to a mutilation. He's supposed to go back to the guy who asked him and see if he can convince him to let me come along, under cover, next time."

Motsinger grinned. "I really want to go on the next one," he said.

"This case can be broken," he said. "We just need some more time, and some more people besides me."

"Is there anything else?" Kagan asked.

"Yeah, there is," said Motsinger, "and this is the best lead yet. We have a letter that was written from one cultist to another, and it's about a cattle mutilation. In fact, it's about that Keota calf, the one the pathology lab confirmed back in May. It was sent anonymously to a law enforcement officer by someone who either intercepted it or Xeroxed it. The cop gave it to me."

"Can I see it?" Kagan asked.

Motsinger reached into one of the red folders and handed Kagan two Xeroxed pages of handwriting. Kagan read it carefully. It was right out of *Jay's Journal*.

"Watching you in action during our latest cult, you'd make a good witch. A very black one at that," it said. "For animal ritual you need syringe (purchase at ______) and sodium pentothal (snitch from any hospital)... ________ has the Keota calf (eye, tongue and sex organs) froze in her deep freeze, plus a big supply of sodium pentothal..."

"And there was no way they weren't in on it," said Motsinger. "The case was never covered in the newspaper, so there's no way they could know which parts were taken from that calf unless they were involved." There was a light in his eye.

The letter then went on to describe how to poison someone, put him in the hospital, and then administer a final dose of arsenic to finish him off. The letter then returned to the subject of the animal mutilation ritual.

"Anyway, back to the animal cult—a dark night and a syringe filled with sodium pentothal, you pick your size of calf—inject your s.p. When it's knocked out you do the operation—How cruel you turn out is determined by how long the calf lives after your operation. The last Keota calf lasted two hours. The ritual was the best we seen yet... We have chosen you to make the next ritual. The territory is yours. [a phone number was included here] 'Insane is the best show!' They never found our last ritual. The wild animals must of got it."

Kagan was impressed. With the last line, the writer had even confirmed that the calf mutilation had received no publicity. The cultists thought it had not been found.

"What are you going to do with this?" Kagan asked.

"We know who that phone number belongs to," said Motsinger. "Right now we have no probable cause to put surveillance on it, but we'll see what happens."

This letter was the first tangible proof we had seen that local cult groups were definitely involved in cattle mutilations. And if this was happening in Iowa, then it could be happening in other states. Local cult activity like this could account for the handful of confirmed or highly suspicious cases of reported cattle mutilation that stood out from the hundreds of erroneous reports that always blossomed during a mutilation wave.

There was an answer to this case after all, and the mutologists had done more than anyone else to obscure it, to prevent it from being understood, to keep it from being solved. With their UFO notions and conspiracy plots, and their erroneous claims of thousands of dead animals, they had successfully helped confuse the local police and the ranchers and farmers who might have helped catch the actual mutilators, the scattering of cults who were committing perhaps half a dozen of these mutilations a year throughout the country.

"This is an open case," Motsinger said. "I will crack it some day."

A Short Inquest Into The Keota Calf

The Iowa State University veterinary diagnostic laboratory building looked just like the Colorado State University Vet School lab we had visited months before when we met with Dr. Albert McChesney: a low, modern, cinderblock structure, with long, bright hallways and rows of pale wooden doors.

Dr. Andrews greeted Kagan warmly. Andrews was in his late thirties and had a shock of blonde hair and a bushy blonde beard, Abe Lincoln style, with no moustache. He was only the second actual veterinary pathologist either of us had met. Kagan glanced at the books on Andrews's shelf: *Canine Neurology, Veterinary Radiology, Veterinary Clinical Pathology, Cell Pathology, Pathology of Domestic Animals, Veterinary Internal Medicine*. The man was a professor of pathology as well as a board-certified vet pathologist. It was good to be in the presence of an expert.

Andrews said he had been consulted about seemingly mutilated animals twice in the past, before the issue ever hit the newspapers. One was a case in which a pig had been found dead at a swine distribution center. It had been killed by a knife wound to the heart, and its ham and loin had been removed. There was blood all around it and footprints as well.

"Of course," said Andrews, "it was a case of meat rustling, not mutilation. They took the edible parts."

Andrews's second brush with a reported mutilation was sometime in the mid-1970s.

"There was a good deal of talk around at that time about Satanic cults," he explained. "I necropsied the animal, it was a calf. The tongue, eyes, and genitals were gone. It indeed appeared as if there was human intervention there. The animal looked like it had been cut with a knife, and that the cutting was done after it was dead.

"Then, of course, these reports started coming in 1979. A few of the reports got to me. There was one, a pig, that was supposedly a mutilation, but the wounds showed that they had been substantially mangled by predators. I found a natural cause of death, a heart lesion. I don't think it was a mutilation."

His next contact with mutilations was the Keota calf in May of 1980, and that was the real thing. Dr. Andrews explained that he and a post-graduate pathology associate, Dr. G. W. Stevenson, had performed the necropsy.

"We had a few points of disagreement about what was cut with a knife and what wasn't, but we agreed generally. There's no good scientific basis for comparison between knife wounds and predator and scavenger damage. A cut is a cut, be it from beak, tooth, or knife. That makes it hard."

Kagan and the doctor decided to work through his report step by step, so Andrews could make detailed comments on his findings. They reviewed the information that had been sent to us by Gerald Shanahan, the chief of the Division of Criminal Investigation.

Shanahan's cover letter had explained the circumstances of the incident. The animal was very small and very young, a 125-pound Charolais bull calf. It had last been seen alive on May 9, 1980, and appeared to be healthy. On the morning of May 11, the owner had heard a cow bellowing in the field, and had driven there to take a look. He had found the calf. The bellowing animal was the calf's mother.

The calf was lying on its left side. There was no rigor mortis, but there was a slight amount of bloat beginning in the carcass. Both eyes had been removed, and "there was blood in and around both eye sockets and on the face of the calf." No mysteriously bloodless wounds here. "The teeth of the calf were coated with blood and the tongue had been removed. The remainder of the tongue in the mouth had 'hacking cuts' on it. The scrotum and testicles had been removed from the calf's underside. The incision was very clean and appeared to have been made with a sharp instrument." These were the unsupported observations made by officers at the scene. They only became relevant after they had been confirmed by Andrews's and Stevenson's necropsy.

Shanahan's letter also noted that the ground around and underneath the animal was dry and hard, and that there were no signs of struggle on it. There was also no blood on the ground near the dead calf.

"You've got to ask some questions about the lack of blood on the wounds and on the ground," said Andrews. "For instance, how much of it was cleaned up by the local coyotes and dogs before the carcass was found? Scavenging predators will routinely lick the external blood off a carcass and stop there before they start going after the flesh, so the fact that there's little blood around or on an animal dead a day or two is not surprising."

While they were on the subject of blood, Kagan threw Dr. Hatfield's findings out to Dr. Andrews for consideration. It was the first reportedly mutilated animal Hatfield had examined, on the basis of which he had concluded that the animal was drained of blood before it died.

"Oh, there's nothing unusual about an empty heart like that," he said. "During rigor mortis the muscles contract strongly, including the heart. The heart contraction will often force all the blood and clots right out of the chambers and leave the heart clean."

Kagan then asked Andrews about Hatfield's other supposedly strange finding, that the animal's brachial artery was open and uncollapsed, and that this was unusual, especially if the animal had been bled out.

"Well, there's nothing unusual about an open lumen [internal hole] in those major arteries after death," he said. "They're not like veins, which don't have muscular walls. Those arteries will *always* be hollow and open, even when the animal is dead and the vessels are empty. Their walls are muscular, so they retain their shape. The fact that the brachial artery was not collapsed is perfectly normal, to be expected."

"What about Hatfield's claim that the carcass was devoid of blood?" asked Kagan.

"The animal was dead quite a while. In that time, the blood clots, the clots contract, and the serum and fluid in the blood leaks out into the tissue. As autolysis proceeds, this happens more and more. The blood is no longer visible as blood."

They turned to the report on the necropsy of the Keota calf that Andrews had submitted to Joe Motsinger.

"Necropsy examination revealed two irregularly shaped hairless areas on the left hip and left shoulder where the hide was abraded," the letter read. "It appeared as if the animal had been dragged a distance on its side."

"Yes," said Andrews, "those were definitely drag marks. I've seen them before. That animal was definitely dragged."

The letter mentioned a "subcutaneous blood clot in the left jugular groove extending the length of the jugular vein which would suggest a possible intravenous injection."

"That clot," said Andrews, "was *outside* the vein. It indicated bleeding from the vein after trauma. It's exactly the kind of wound you see in an animal that's been injected with antibiotics. It was perfectly consistent with normal bleeding outside a vein after an intravenous injection. Unfortunately, I found no identifiable needle marks."

"There was also a subcutaneous blood clot measuring approximately 5 cm. by 4 cm. in the left abdominal area indicating fairly recent trauma," said the letter.

"That bruise on the side of the belly was too big for an injection site," said Andrews, "but it could have been from something like the impact of a tranquilizer dart gun."

The idea was that the calf might have been knocked down by a dose of something in a trank dart, then given an additional intravenous shot of something to keep it immobile once it was down. Thus the flank clot and the jugular clot.

The letter described that "the tongue was absent from the level of the second premolar . . . The margin of the remaining stump was in a nearly transverse plane and somewhat jagged with clotted or dried blood adherent to its surface."

"That tongue was the most suggestive evidence of human intervention of all the wounds," said Andrews. "It was removed much too far back in the mouth to have been done by a predator. In fact, we were able to reproduce that tongue wound on another dead calf we had in the lab. The wound on that mutilated calf is perfectly consistent with what we did to the other one in the lab: pull the tongue way out, reach in, and cut it off. The cut we made that way on the other calf fell in almost exactly the same place as the one on the mutilated animal.

"The next question was whether the tongue was cut before or after death. There was blood on the calf's teeth, but that was no indication. If the tongue had been cut while the animal was alive, there would have been blood in the lungs or the stomach, so that's where we looked. There was no blood in either place, so the tongue had to be cut after the animal was dead, after the heart stopped beating. Of course, this could mean that it could have been anywhere from five minutes to ten hours after the heart stopped. There's no way to tell. But this finding led us to postulate that it was likely that all the other wounds were also inflicted post mortem."

The letter to Motsinger noted that the outer quarter of one of the ears was missing, and that a ragged, irregular wound was left behind.

"That ear was taken off by a predator," said Andrews.

The letter went on to say that "Both eyes were absent while the eyelids were intact and appeared to be normal. The left globe was missing while the conjunctival membranes and attendant connective tissue remained. The right globe, conjunctival membranes, and connective tissues were missing, leaving the periosteum [the membrane over the orbit bone] of the orbit exposed."

Andrews explained that he was undecided about whether the eyes had been removed by predatory birds or with a sharp instrument.

"There was possible human action on the eyes," said Andrews. "The birds could have done it; they will pluck out the eye and clean out the musculature, too, so it's possible that the eye could have been taken by predators. But also by humans—"

"Why?" asked Kagan.

"Because *both* eyes were taken," said Andrews, "the up side *and* the down side eye. I'd absolutely stand by the idea of predators if only the up side eye had been taken. But with both gone, it's hard to tell.

"We tried to duplicate the eye surgery on another calf, using a knife. It was extremely difficult to remove the eyeball with a knife, even more difficult to do it that way without cutting the lids."

Motsinger had told Peter Jordan about this several months ago, and Jordan, in his typical style, had relayed the story to us after adding that Andrews had therefore said something about the eye surgery being, of course, "beyond human capability," and possibly the result of some kind of advanced laser surgery technique. Andrews never said anything about the eye removal being beyond human capability, and he certainly never said anything about lasers. All he said was that it was tough to duplicate with a knife.

Andrews's letter to Motsinger described the belly wound on the calf where the scrotum and testicles had been taken off.

"The scrotum and testicles were absent with a well circumscribed circular to slightly ovoid hole in the skin remaining in the

inguinal region . . . with the margins being very uniform and smooth . . . and very sharp and well demarcated vertically. The prepuce and penis remained intact and appeared to be normal. There was dried or clotted blood on the hair extending approximately 2-3 inches peripherally from the circular lesions."

It was interesting that Andrews had noticed the dried blood around this wound. Again, this was no mysteriously bloodless cut. Yet the photographs of the calf, which were sharp closeups and in color, showed no discernible blood.

"I can exactly duplicate that wound," said Andrews, "by pulling the scrotum out and cutting it off."

Kagan asked him if he had examined the wound edges microscopically to determine if the flesh had been cut, and also to determine if the hair shafts around the wound had been cross-cut as opposed to jaggedly torn as by predator teeth.

"Yes," he said. "But it's very difficult to analyze the damage to the hair in this area because it's thin there, and you might not see enough smooth-cut hair shafts to really tell if it was cut or chewed." Andrews explained why he was sure the scrotum wound was the result of human action.

"The symmetry of the lesion, for one. And the underlying structures were undisturbed, including the penis. It was left intact, even though its back end came right through the scrotum wound. This is inconsistent with predator damage.

"The animal was lying on its side with its legs folded down to cover the scrotal wound. It would be difficult for a predator to get in there and leave the legs so neatly in that position."

Andrews's letter noted that the carcass appeared to contain a normal amount of blood "which would not be compatible with exsanguination." Andrews, probably because he had been informed by Motsinger, was carefully checking through all of the claims made in the mutilation mythos, and making sure he investigated anything that might support any of the more bizarre attributes. He had even run a black light over the calf to see if there was any fluorescent material.

The letter noted that "fluorescent material appeared to be only on the tips of the hair and only in very small amounts and could be rubbed off easily with the fingers."

"That fluorescence was nothing," said Andrews. "There are many natural fluorescent materials that an animal could pick up on its hair—oils, greases, stuff around the farm."

Dr. Andrews's report said that there were no bacterial cultures done on the calf's tissues because they had autolysed—broken down—too much for accurate tests of that kind. The letter also noted that no specific cause of death had been determined.

"It is our opinion," the letter ended, "that the gross appearance of some lesions highly suggests human intervention. More specifically, the level at which the tongue was missing would make it nearly impossible for a predator to have accomplished the removal . . . the uniformity and acuity of the lesion in the inguinal area [the scrotum wound] suggests that a sharp instrument was used in the removal of the scrotum and testicles. The margin appeared to be too uniform to have been made by predators. Finally the presence of a blood clot in the left jugular groove suggests that an intravenous injection may have been made, however, this lesion could also have been produced by a severe blow."

The results were tantalizingly incomplete. Too bad Andrews had not been able to come up with the most perfect final detail, an exact cause of death for the calf, preferably the drug that was used to lay it down. Chemistries were run on the tissues to try to identify any drugs that might have been administered to the animal. The results were negative. The lab had used thin-layer gas chromatography to test for "commonly used short-acting injectable anesthetics . . . barbiturates, Ketamine, and xylazine," and had come up with none of them.

Kagan asked the doctor why he had not tested for succinylcholine. So far, from everything we had heard and read, particularly from Dr. Green in Canada and Herb Anderson in Montana, this drug was the perfect one to use if you wanted to knock down and kill an animal without leaving any trace.

"Our lab is not set up to test for it," he explained. "It's one of the most difficult drugs to find and identify after it's been metabolized because its residues, its metabolytes, are very similar to normal body metabolytes.

"Thin-layer chromatography will screen for it and find it only if it's still in compound form," said Andrews. "After it's broken down, it's hard to find."

But the cause of death wasn't absolutely necessary in this case. There was that letter Motsinger had shown. You couldn't ask for better substantiation to back up Andrews's findings. Too bad he had not tested for sodium pentothal.

"Ultimately," Andrews said, "Dr. Stevenson and I were convinced that the calf had been mutilated by humans using sharp instruments. There was some predator damage on the carcass as well. That ear, for instance. And the calf had a very obvious anal wound, too, but it was so clearly predator work that we didn't bother with it. I still have my doubts about whether or not the eyes were taken by predators or by whoever cut it up, even though both were gone. Basically, here's how Dr. Stevenson and I differed: he thought the eyes were taken by someone, surgically, I felt they were taken by birds; we both agree that the scrotum was removed with a sharp instrument, but I think the scrotum wound was made after death, and he thinks it was made while the calf was still alive. And we both agree that the tongue was cut off by someone with a knife."

Kagan asked the doctor what he thought about the mutology claims of thousands of mutilations. He didn't tell Andrews that we had already proved that the claims of the mutologists of 10,000 mutilated animals were completely fictitious.

"I have yet to see convincing evidence that these things are any kind of widespread phenomenon," he answered. "As a result of seeing this animal, I'm obviously convinced that there are a few people around who do these things. Why? I don't know. But you've also got to remember there have to have been mutilations like this done by pranksters and copycats in areas where there's been press coverage. I'm still fairly open. I hope Motsinger comes up with a solution. But you've also got to bear in mind that predator damage mimics this kind of damage."

Kagan then mentioned to Andrews that his findings had created a bit of a contradiction in the Rommel Report. Andrews's own boss, Dr. Vaughn Seaton, the head of the veterinary lab, had written to Rommel emphatically declaring that all instances of reported cattle mutilations were predator damage, yet Andrews's own findings contradicted him.

"Well," said Dr. Andrews, smiling, "cattle mutilations are a kind of volatile issue at this lab. Dr. Seaton and Dr. Daniels think the whole thing is a crock. They think our report is in error. But at the same time, Seaton recognizes that Stevenson and I are more expert pathologists than he is, otherwise he wouldn't have hired us to handle pathology for his laboratory, now would he?"

Kagan then asked Andrews what he thought about the leads Motsinger had turned up pointing toward local cults being responsible for this animal and possibly a few others.

"Well," said the doctor, "I'm a Catholic, and that kind of thing gives me cause for concern. I have children, and I worry about what kinds of things they might be exposed to. If you believe in God, then you've got to believe in the devil, and if there are people running around who have taken an allegiance to evil, the odds are they'll do something to back up their beliefs.''

A few hours later, Kagan caught a plane back to New York.

10

The Royal Path

The Medicine Of The Dead

About two weeks after the end of our trip, after we had spent some time comparing notes and wading through the mass of interviews, reports, and photographs we had collected, we decided it was finally time to pay a visit to the estimable Dr. John King, diagnostic veterinary pathologist, professor of veterinary pathology, and director of the Necropsy Laboratory at Cornell University's New York School of Veterinary Medicine in Ithaca, New York.

Kagan hopped a one-hour commuter jet flight up to Ithaca. In his traveling bag were hundreds of pages of police and veterinary reports, photographs, and the texts of all the interviews we had conducted with veterinarians and veterinary pathologists during the course of our research. The idea was to go Ken Rommel one better. Instead of eliciting a few letters from a handful of pathologists around the country as commentary on a few isolated reports, we would ask Dr. King to look over all the material and give us a point-by-point evaluation of the few vet reports that the mutology network and the mutilation journalists so dearly loved to wave like banners.

Not only was Dr. King a highly experienced veterinary pathologist, but he had told us that his veterinary diagnostic laboratory at Cornell performed more necropsies per year on more different kinds of animals than any other such lab in the country. Cornell's vet lab routinely ended up with cases from all over, pathology puzzles that no one else had the expert staff to deal with.

Kagan was met at the Ithaca airport by one of Dr. King's post-graduate pathology students, a small, quiet young woman named Lois Roth. As they drove toward the university, Kagan asked her about the schooling necessary to become a veterinary pathologist.

''It takes twelve or thirteen years of school just to get the pathology Ph.D. before you can really even begin to practice,'' Roth explained. ''Then you've got to pass the Boards if you want to be certified, and they're really tough.

''There's four years of undergraduate work, four years of vet school for a D.V.M., and then usually five years postgraduate work for the pathology Ph.D.,'' she explained. ''The training period for the vet pathology degree is as long as many medical and surgical specialties in human medicine. It's a small group,'' she said, ''and all the good ones know each other.'' They arrived at the lab's concrete loading door, climbed up the dock's ramp and walked into the necropsy room.

The huge room was designed for dead animals, not people. The floor was tiled. There were three stainless steel necropsy tables, each with a drain hole and its own water supply to flush away blood and clean up parts as they were removed for analysis. One of the tables was about eight by ten feet.

The room had doors at both ends. On one side the doorways led through a small laboratory room for spot chemical tests and into a changing alcove where there were racks of black rubber boots and lab coats. The three doors on the other end led either into another changing alcove with boots and coats or through a tremendous walk-through refrigerator where animals and parts awaiting work were stored, or through to a high-ceilinged concrete room with seating scaffolds surrounding a long table. It was in this last room that the students sat in the bleachers while Dr. King ran what he called ''show-and-tell'' sessions, where he would present them with different tissue samples, organs, and problems in pathology, and quiz the gallery for answers.

Just then Dr. King came through the door. He was walking with a determined, rolling gait that looked a bit strange. He explained to Kagan that he had been out mountain climbing a few months before, had taken a fall, and had broken both his ankles. ''But I'm almost back to normal,'' he said. ''The doctor says I'm still supposed to be using a crutch, but what the hell.''

After Kagan had spent just a few minutes with King, he realized that his attitude about his climbing injuries and his doctor's instructions pretty well typified the man's personal style. King was a vigorous man in his early fifties with broad shoulders, about five-ten and in great shape. He had a gray crewcut, clear eyes, and craggy features. He was a man who knew exactly what he was doing, liked to do things his own way, and wasn't squeamish about saying precisely what was on his mind. King was vital, feisty, arrogant, and abrasive, while at the same time very funny and appealing. He had style.

If anyone was qualified to say that veterinary reports on reportedly mutilated cattle should be taken with a pound of skepticism, it was John King. It was his job to yield up the right answer after veterinarians untrained in pathology had come up with the wrong ones. He and Kagan walked to his office and sat down. Kagan asked him about his own background.

"I've been in pathology since I graduated from vet school in 1955," said King. "I got my Ph.D. and was board-certified in 1961, so I've been a pathologist for nineteen years. In 1960 and 1961 I worked as a pathologist at Washington State University. From '61 through '67 I was at Carnegie-Mellon, specializing in toxicological pathology. I've been here since 1968. This is where I got my path degree in the first place.

"I've done a lot of human autopsies, too," he said. "I was the only veterinarian ever to be a member of the Pittsburgh Pathology Society. I also get called in frequently by the local hospital here in Ithaca to do human autopsies for them.

"Cornell vet school is probably the best overall school for pathology in America," he said. He began explaining why this was so.

"Not many other schools can afford the expertise we've got in this dump," he said. "We have the bucks. A lot of the other vet schools have some very good pathology people, but usually they have one or two good general pathology men who have no backup in the specialties, so their diagnostic resources are limited.

"All our guys are top experts. That means they know eighty-five percent of everything in their field. Nobody gets credit for one hundred percent because no one knows everything, not even King," he said, referring to himself in the third person. His staff included experts in muscle tissue pathology, dermatological pathology, bone pathology, kidney pathology, electron microscopy and collagen diseases, basic pathology, wildlife pathology, tumors, and parasitic diseases.

"You've got to understand," said King, "each one of these men is a major specialist in his field.

"Now, about these animal mutilation cases," said King. "I've never had one in here. We get a few of the standard sadism cases every year, you know, a horse with a broom handle up its rear end, but those are easy to make out. We do see animals with clean-cut looking rectums, eyeballs, and like that, but usually if you look long enough, you find a natural cause."

Kagan was ready to begin running our conveyor belt full of queries past the doctor. We had decided to start at square one, with the most basic animal pathology questions that seemed to crop up most often throughout the cattle mutilation phenomenon.

"We've run across lots of references to *Clostridia* bacteria found in the carcasses of supposedly mutilated animals," Kagan said. "Some people say this is strange, that the bugs don't belong there. What about it?" he asked King.

"Cows' guts are full of *Clostridia*," said King. "When an animal dies, everything starts to grow in there. There's nothing strange about finding all kinds of *Clostridia* in a dead cow. Generally, animals with a clostridial infection will die very fast in a high fever." This probably explained many of the "no signs of struggle" incidents in which animals had seemingly keeled over on the spot. "Also," said King, "the carcass of one of these animals would tend to decompose very quickly. Those bugs grow like hell in the anaerobic conditions of a carcass."

"Some people have said that the sex organs of reportedly mutilated cows are taken for use in genetic experimentation, cloning, or something like that," said Kagan. "What's your opinion about that?"

"Samples from sex organs are only worth anything if they're taken from a live animal and quick-frozen on the spot under highly sterile conditions," said King. "That's just too tough to do out in the field. Why bother? Why bother taking the whole organ when all you need is a little piece? Oh, and by the way, you asked me about some kind of sampling for toxins that might be accumulating in tissues. Remember, I'm pretty good in toxicology, too. There are no toxins that I know of that will concentrate in the genitalia. So forget about that as a sampling target."

"Okay," said Kagan. "Now we've got all these accounts that say 'no signs of struggle' about these animals' deaths. People always say this as if no signs of struggle are very, very strange, that animals always leave visible signs of struggle before they die. What's the story on this?''

''There's nothing strange about an animal dying without struggle,'' said King. ''There are so many ways an animal can die suddenly, just keel over, I couldn't name them all even if I tried. There are ruptured liver abscesses, they fall over dead in ten minutes. There's lightning. I would say that about fifty percent of cattle that die show no signs of struggle, they just fall down dead.''

How about the persistent claims of blood loss?

''Again,'' said King, ''there are lots of things that make a carcass *appear* to be missing blood after death. In a cold location, for instance, the water in the blood disappears fast, the carcass gets dehydrated, so there's little recognizable blood to be found in it. Or the animal can die from dehydration. When this happens, there's very little fluid left in the carcass at all, including blood. What blood is left disappears very quickly after death.''

And how many of the reported mutilations that died during high summer might have been dehydrated, Kagan mused? Had any of the mutologists, or untrained lawmen, or journalists ever checked into this as an explanation for ''bloodless'' carcasses? Of course not.

''Certainly after a few days, definitely after a week, it will be very hard to find the blood,'' said King. ''The red cells settle, the serum water dries out, you can't find anything.''

''What about a fresh kill,'' asked Kagan, ''dead twelve hours or less?''

''Well, you've got to know something about the animal's condition *before death,* you've got to diagnose what killed it before a seeming lack of blood is called unusual. Is the animal anemic? If it's anemic, you'll find whitish tissues and watery blood which will disappear very quickly or not be recognized as blood. There are other common disorders that will leave an animal anemic and make it hard to see blood in its carcass; anaplasmosis, leptospirosis. And both of these will also show icteric, yellowing of the organs and tissues.

''You've got to understand,'' he continued, ''that there are no hard and fast rules about things like blood clotting or disintegration. Different things happen under different circumstances. For

instance, if the blood clots slowly, the red cells settle to the lower parts with the fibrinogen and you get the 'currant jelly' clot, the dark red one people usually recognize as a blood clot. But the top part of the blood, the liquid, the serum and water, forms a yellowish clot called a 'chicken fat clot' because it looks like chicken fat. I would say that with untrained people and with clinical vets with no pathology training looking at these animals, they might not even see a chicken fat clot as blood at all, and think that the animal had too little blood in it.

''Basically, you need to know the cause of death of an animal before you can say that it had an abnormally low amount of blood. There are too many things that can have that effect—seemingly reduced blood volume in a carcass.''

Kagan asked Dr. King to comment on Dr. Hatfield's belief that there was something strange about finding only twenty-five cc of pericardial fluid in the reportedly mutilated animal he claimed had been drained of blood.

''That's not unusual if the animal has been dead for a while,'' said King. ''He said that animal had been dead at least thirty-six hours, if not more, right? There's nothing strange about it. You need to know the cause of death before you know the lack of blood is unusual. This guy never tried to find out if the animal died from anemia, dehydration, whatever, so his findings are not valid.

''Clinical vets don't know about pathological analysis,'' King said, perhaps for the twentieth time since we had first gotten in touch with him. ''Even the clinicians in our lab, and those guys are very good, can't recognize things that are hitting them in the head. I see that all the time. And I'm always surprised myself at the lack of removable blood in animals that have been dead for even a little while.''

''What about the reports of no blood around the wounds on these animals?'' Kagan asked.

''That would mean that the animal died before the cuts were made,'' said King.

''How long after death before the wounds wouldn't bleed because the blood had clotted?'' asked Kagan.

''That depends on the circumstances of the death, like always,'' King answered. ''A dead animal's blood will clot at different speeds. For instance if there's acute septicemia or infection, the blood will clot very fast. Any infection, *Clostridia,* salmonella, it doesn't matter, the blood will clot fast. See, I'm very suspicious about these claims of no blood in the carcass, because they're never accompanied by a finding for the cause of death, which is usually the answer to the question of why there seems to be very little blood."

"Let's imagine for a minute that we have a real mutilation case," Kagan suggested. "The animal dies from trauma, it's killed with a dose of succinylcholine from a dart gun. Will the blood clot quickly and leave relatively bloodless wounds when the killer cuts it apart?"

"If an animal is physically stressed, chased, or scared, he's full of adrenaline as a biological reaction to that stress," King said. "And any animal that dies in this condition will clot real fast, it will clot completely in an hour.

"Remember," King said, "things are still happening in that carcass after it's dead. What happens to the blood after death? Rigor mortis squeezes the blood back to the lungs and the gut. You should find more clots there. The kind and duration of rigor mortis, like everything else that happens post mortem, depends entirely on the animal's physical state just before it died. The speed, intensity, and duration of rigor mortis is directly related to the oxygen content in the tissues at the moment of death. The higher the oxygen content before death, the greater the relative drop in oxygen content at the moment of death when the oxygen supply to the tissues is stopped. When the drop in oxygen is steep, rigor mortis comes on very fast, is very intense and leaves quickly. When the drop is not so great, it comes on slowly, lasts longer, and takes longer to dissipate.

"Now, in an animal that's scared, being chased, running, the tissues are going to be full of oxygen. If it's killed then, like with your tranquilizer dart gun, the drop in oxygen at the point of death is going to be very great, so it will go right into rigor mortis, very intense, which will also leave very quickly. During rigor mortis, the blood will be squeezed out of the muscles, out of the heart, and into gut and the lungs. Which means that if this animal is cut soon after death, whether by predators or by someone with a knife, you'd get about one-tenth the normal bleeding you'd expect if the animal was alive."

"How would *you* exsanguinate an animal without cutting its throat?" he asked King. King would have some good ideas if anyone did.

"Well, the best way would be to stab the thoracic inlet, the vena cava, the big vessel that leads into the heart. But, of course, that would leave a stab wound, and those reported mutilations don't have stab wounds, so that's out. You'd have a problem cutting just the carotid artery or the aorta. They're both very elastic and they would tend to pull away from the knife."

Kagan mentioned that the vet reports that concluded that animals had been exsanguinated, like Hatfield's, and Dr. Fitzgerald's from Durango, Colorado, usually mentioned that they had found something like needle puncture wounds over the jugular vein, and therefore assumed that the animal had been bled dry through the jugular with a needle.

"If you wanted to do it through the jugular," said King, "you'd have to cross-cut the whole vein. That would make an obvious wound, and none of these reports say anything about wounds. And a bleed-out through the jugular would probably clot before you were done. When I do that to an animal, I usually take about a gallon of blood, eight pints. That takes about fifteen minutes through the jugular, and I use a big twelve-gauge needle. This means that fifty or sixty pints from a cow would take at least an hour and a half, if not up to three hours. And you've got to count delays; the needle would probably slip out and things like that. The jugular is very difficult to deal with. You could probably make it easier if you put a cannula [long, rigid, hollow tube] into the vein. But if you wanted to do that you'd have to make an incision, and that would leave a wound you'd see, and none of these reports mention jugular wounds. Besides, it's hard to do that. Even our good vets have trouble with cannulas.

"If there are neck punctures, they're more likely injection sites. It's just too difficult to exsanguinate an animal through the jugular using even a large needle. Remember, even a big needle has a little hole. Imagine trying to drain five or six gallons of blood through the tiny hole in a goddamned needle.

"Oh," said King, "there's one more thing. You really can't exsanguinate all, or even most, of the blood from an animal by just making one, or even two puncture wounds in the jugular vein. If you just stuck one or two needles into the jugular, you'd only be getting blood from *one side* of the *forward* portion of the body. In order to get the blood out this way, forgetting for a minute all the trouble you'd have doing it through a little needle, you'd have to tie the vein between the two needles to divide the circulatory system in half. This would require an incision, and none of the people who claim their animals were exsanguinated found an incision. And even if you did this, you'd only be getting the blood from the head and the heart. You wouldn't be able to significantly drain the animal, because you wouldn't get any blood from the viscera or the rear end. The whole idea of supposed needle marks meaning that an animal has been exsanguinated is not good. It doesn't work. It's not efficient."

So France, Hatfield, Fitzgerald were all wet. So were the mutologists and local cops who held that animals had been exsanguinated through seeming needle marks. The claims of bloodless carcasses could not possibly be due to exsanguination via needles. The only claims of exsanguination that could stand up were those where the appropriate wounds and severed vessels were present, and there were none of those.

"The owner and some other people claimed that the [Blake] horse seemed 'embalmed,' " said Kagan, "that it didn't bloat or decompose visibly for weeks after it died. They said it seemed not to decay. Can you think of any causes for this?"

"Arsenic poisoning," King said immediately. "Arsenic would preserve a carcass, and predators wouldn't touch it. Arsenic is commonly used in many herbicides and defoliants. The horse could have eaten some and died. Or it could have had a high chronic level of arsenic in its system that didn't kill it but slowed its decay after death."

We now knew another answer to Linda Howe's mystification at the Blake horse, in addition to the likelihood that it had been killed by lightning and torn up by predators and scavengers.

"It's also not unusual for the hide to remain intact like it was on that animal," said King. "A horse has a tough hide. This will sometimes keep the bloat to a minimum; it won't swell much, the belly won't split. It will rot from the inside." Exactly, thought Kagan, as the horse we had seen had done.

"I can show you animals dead six months that have that much hide still on them," said King.

"And after it's too rotten, even the predators and scavengers won't touch it," King added. "There's no evidence they like partially decomposed carcasses."

"What about the eye?" asked Kagan. "The eyeball was intact, but the muscle and tissue from around it was gone. They thought this was evidence of weirdness."

"That sounds like crows," King replied. "I've seen them do just that. The eyeball is too big for them to take the whole thing, so they pick out the surrounding muscle and tissue. It's easier for them."

Kagan then asked him his opinion of the mutologist theory that Howard Burgess liked so much, the one that said that eyes and ears were taken from mutilated animals because the deaths were part of a CB warfare experiment, and they were analyzed by the clandestine government experimenters to see how far their bacterial weapon had penetrated the animal's body.

For the first time in the conversation, King's face wrinkled up in exasperation and disgust.

"Do the liver and lung go to sleep while the eye absorbs?" he asked. "If you inject something, within minutes it's spread throughout the entire circulatory system. That whole idea is bullshit. Time is not a factor in absorption. The specificity of certain drugs for certain organs is a factor. That has to do with enzymes, not time.

"But," he said, "if you're dealing with bacteria that enter the carcass *after* death, then you're no longer dealing with the circulatory system transporting the stuff. You're dealing with the mechanics of bacteria traveling through different tissues. Here you'd go for the bone marrow and the eye for a sample, because since the bacteria in a *dead* animal have to go through tissue to get to those two places, it would take them longer. But this has nothing to do with what those people are talking about. They're saying that the animals are injected while they're still alive, and in that case the whole notion is ridiculous."

"How about the mescaline lab finding in that animal that was examined by Dr. Hatfield?" Kagan asked.

"I have one question," said King. "Where did the hay the animal was eating come from? What state? Was it a state where the peyote plant grows? Could the food have been contaminated?"

This was a wonderful point that we had completely missed. Another relevant question never asked by Hatfield, or Rystrom, or the mutologists.

King adjourned our meeting for class, but we returned to the subject later in his office, when we discussed Dr. Gary France's findings.

About the belly wound on the horse, King said, "Owners don't always know what they're doing. An owner could have made that kind of incision out of ignorance. Maybe the owner cut off the penis because he couldn't tell it from the spermatic cords.

But France's observation of a possible injection site right over the jugular vein is beautiful, right where it should be.''

Kagan described France's findings on the third animal he had examined, and when he got to the part about the burned-looking patches on the intestines, King held up his hand for him to be quiet. He thought for a moment.

''I am willing to bet $200 against a cup of coffee that that animal died from pseudomelanosis. It's a disulfide reaction. It's bacterial and occurs in the blood. At death, the action of the bacteria in the blood causes exactly the described effects, those blackened, burned-looking patches. The bacteria come from the guts, exactly where the blackened areas were.''

''What about France's observation that there was no spilling of the fecal matter into the abdominal cavity?'' Kagan asked.

''That would happen if the wounds were made after peristalsis stopped, after death, or if the bowel was empty,'' said King.

Kagan turned his questions back toward Dr. Hatfield's animals. He asked King about the first animal Hatfield had examined.

''He said all the blood was removed,'' Kagan said.

''These guys just don't know anything about dried blood,'' said King. He leafed through Hatfield's report. ''There's nothing in here that doesn't fit the predator pattern,'' he said. ''Nothing. You simply can't prove that the dogs hadn't eaten on it. The owner can't prove it, and neither can Hatfield, not from what's written here. They could have stopped eating due to the warm weather. The carcass got too rotten for them and that was that.''

''What about the absolutely clean heart chambers?'' asked Kagan.

''Nothing to it,'' said King, echoing what Dr. Andrews had said in Iowa. ''It's not unusual, I've seen it before. Rigor mortis.''

''What about the open blood vessels? Hatfield said this was because the animal had been bled out while saline was pumped in.'' Kagan wanted to see if King would give the same answer that Andrews had.

''Come with me,'' said King. He led Kagan into the necropsy room. Kagan slipped on boots and rubber gloves. Seven students were swarming over a cow carcass which had been hoisted up on the big steel table. They were performing a necropsy, and it was something to see. One was working on the head end, three had the gut open and were threading through it looking for lesions and obstructions, bone saws and knives were flying through the animal's parts. The students looked like a pit crew laboring against the clock, swarming over an Indy 500 racing car.

The animal was freshly killed, just minutes before. The room stank of cow shit, because the animal's guts were open. There was blood all over the table, all over the floor. The students slipped and slid over the bloody tile as they moved around the cow. Kagan had trouble keeping his own balance on the slick gore. One of the students detached himself from the group and came over to Kagan. Dr. King followed closely behind him. The student had something in his hand.

''Here,'' he said, handing it to Kagan. Kagan took it. It was whitish, tubular, about three inches long, hollow, and covered with a film of blood. It looked exactly like a single piece of ziti in tomato sauce. He pressed its sides together, and they bounced open as soon as he let go.

''That should answer your question about whether or not that vet Hatfield knew what he was talking about when he thought the open, hollow arteries in that animal were something strange,'' said King. ''That's a piece of the brachial artery. Notice, please, that it's elastic and holds its shape, even though there's no blood in it. Notice how it remains hollow and open, even though it's no longer even attached to the cow?''

They went back to King's office.

''What about that subcutaneous tract Hatfield found when he cut the animal up?'' asked Kagan. ''It started from a wound that went into the stomach between the ribs and led up under the skin to the shoulder. He described it as if someone had run a sword or a pool cue under the hide of the animal's shoulder, down its side, and into the abdominal cavity.''

''So what?'' said King. ''I can't explain it. Big deal. I have seen lots of things I can't explain, that doesn't mean they mean anything. I once necropsied a dog that had been hit by a car. I found the heart all the way over under the axilla, the armpit, under the forepaw. It didn't belong there and there was no way that the impact from the car could have done it. It was completely unexplainable. No one could explain it, and we've got some sharp people here. Animals differ, carcasses differ. It doesn't mean anything.''

They progressed to the second animal Hatfield had ''confirmed'' as a mutilation. While Kagan was describing the damage to the carcass, King rummaged in his file cabinet.

"You just said this guy was impressed at how the lips were taken off in a neat semicircle, top and bottom on one side? Take a look at this." King handed him a slide of the head of a dead calf that had been partially eaten by predators.

"In this case, it was rats," said King. "They have sharp little teeth and they're very neat."

One of the animal's nostrils had been chewed away, but it sure didn't look that way. It looked as though someone had carefully cut out a semicircle of hide from the calf's nose. It looked clean and surgical.

"And if they had kept on eating, the wound would have been even smoother," said King. "It varies from case to case."

Kagan told him about Dr. Andrews's findings on the Keota calf. He wanted to see if King would agree with the other pathologist.

About Andrews's conclusion that the animal's wounds were almost bloodless because predators had licked the blood off the hide, King said, "I agree. They'll do that."

On the rest of Andrews's findings Dr. King was less sure.

"It's all a little goosey for me," King said. "I really can't say anything about that possible injection site, or about the scrotum wound. He may be right, those may be from an injection and from knife work, but both could also have been caused by dogs if they killed that little calf. The same thing goes for the tongue removal. It could be knife work, if Andrews really knows what he's doing, or it could be predators. I really don't know.

"Look," said King. "I'm open to any possibilities with these things, but I'm also prone to be a nonbeliever after everything you've told me. I sure wish I could see one of those supposedly mutilated carcasses.

"Let me show you my museum," King said suddenly. He went to a steel cabinet and opened the doors. He started to remove things and put them on the desk for Kagan to look at.

King placed a briefcase on the desk and opened it. He took out several clear plastic slide holder pages and handed them to Kagan. Instead of slides, each pocket held a small bit of metal. There were S-hooks, bits of wire, nails. There were sixty-seven pieces of metal in all.

"You've heard of hardware disease by now, I'm sure," he said. "Every one of these little things killed an animal I necropsied. They'll swallow anything."

Also in the case were what looked like several rounded, smooth stones. King picked one up and handed it to Kagan. It was unexpectedly light, like a piece of cork. It was the size of a baseball.

"These are stomach calculi," King said. "They're like kidney stones, mineral deposits; animals grow them in their stomachs and intestines for different reasons. This one came out of a raccoon that was eating the paint off the walls of his cage in a zoo. The paint built up into this. Killed the little fellow."

There was another calculus, round, veined with blue, very smooth and light. It was as big as a grapefruit.

"That one is from a horse's intestines," said King.

He handed Kagan another one, bigger than the previous one, almost as big as a cantaloupe. It was cream-colored.

"This one also came out of a horse's belly," King said, and took it apart where it had been cut in half. Inside, it had concentric rings of sediment, and Kagan could see how it had been built up over time.

"The horse swallowed a tiny twig, it lodged in his gut, and the calculus just grew around it," King explained. And with a piece of tree at its center, the stone itself had annual rings like a tree.

It was late. King had to leave. He would drive Kagan to his hotel. They walked out through the necropsy room. On the huge dissection table, the cow carcass had been replaced by a dead horse. Several students were working over it. King walked over to the pathology student who was supervising the necropsy.

"So she didn't make it, eh? Too bad," he said.

"This horse was injured by another horse in its herd," King explained to Kagan. "Some old lady horse kicked the shit out of her, broke the leg, the thigh bone, and broke the shoulder too. We set the bones this morning and hoped she'd survive, but a couple of minutes later she re-broke the bones. Hopeless. They just euthanized her a few minutes ago, gave it a shot of some anesthetic in the jugular vein."

Here was a golden opportunity for Kagan to have a few more questions answered. After all the talk among the mutologists about needle marks and the claims of broken legs, here was a chance to observe both at close range and see if the claims matched reality.

The student located the needle puncture wound on the horse's neck for Kagan and dissected it right through the hide and flesh to the point on the vein where the needle went in. This was a fresh carcass, no degeneration, no time to rot, and even so Kagan could barely see the needle mark or the hole in the vein. You'd have to be a real expert to be able to identify one of these on an animal dead a day or two.

Kagan asked about the broken leg. He wanted to see exactly how easy it was to tell that an animal's leg was broken.

The student had already removed the horse's broken rear leg to examine the bone inside it. The leg was cut off whole, including the thigh. The student hooked the leg onto one of the electric winches on the ceiling and pressed a button. The leg, which must have weighed over a hundred pounds, was lifted off the table and laid on the floor at Kagan's feet. It was lying with the outside against the floor, so Kagan was looking at the *inside* of the leg, at the muscles around the broken bone. This was a better view than Rystrom, Valdez, or Burgess had ever had of any of their claimed mutilations. Kagan looked closely. He could not tell at all that the leg was broken. There was simply no outside sign of it. King showed him exactly where to look, and he still could not see it. There was simply no way to tell by visual inspection alone. Clearly, it was almost impossible to spot a broken leg on a dead animal.

King talked as he and Kagan drove to the hotel.

"You've got to understand some things about the field of pathology," he said. "It's all about observing, observing, and then putting what you find up against what you've seen. You've got to be able to argue over what you find. You've got to be able to argue with yourself, as well as with other people's findings.

"And all we do at the lab is argue with everyone else. This is a tricky field, and most people who make pathology judgments, like clinical vets, don't know what they're talking about. We're here, the lab is here because someone sends in something that they think is one thing, like those vets whose reports you showed me, and we find out it's something else. They're almost invariably wrong. That's our whole purpose.

"You've got to stick strictly with what you see and only what you see," King said, "when you make a conclusion. It's a mistake to go too far into details about exactly how the animals got into a particular condition if you can't see very obvious evidence for it. You'll always have to change your details later if you do that. It's premature and presumptuous, and it leads to mistakes."

And, Kagan noted for himself, the entire strength of the mutologist line and the mutilation phenomenon was based precisely on just those kinds of extrapolated, convoluted spirals of detail that were based not on what the reportedly mutilated carcasses *looked like*, but on imaginative passages about hypothetical ways they had come to look the way they did.

"You know," said King, "I talked to a few of my old buddies, vet pathologists at some of the university labs that had done necropsies on these animals in the Midwest. Some of these guys have had their hands on supposedly mutilated animals, and they found predator damage.

"When they found out I was going to talk to you about this thing, they warned me to shut up and not say anything."

"Why would they do that?" Kagan asked.

"They said 'You'll get in trouble. They'll misquote you and write things that you don't want written.' I told 'em, 'Hell, if I don't talk to them they'll say we're covering something up. They'll go and talk to someone who's not as good as me, and they'll get a bunch of bullshit. I don't want that to happen, so here I am.' " He grinned.

"This is a small field. There's not much room for boat-rockers like me."

They reached Kagan's hotel, and he said good night to the doctor and thanked him for his help.

Clinical veterinary medicine ultimately has very little in common with veterinary pathology. Clinical vet medicine is the science of living organisms, their symptoms, and how to treat them. Pathology is the study of the nature of disease and death, particularly the structural and functional changes caused by them. The two sets of patients for each branch of medicine are quite different. The live ones can be diagnosed, observed, tested, and examined for their responses. The dead ones just lie there, and the full responsibility is on the expertise of the pathologist, and on the acuity of his powers of observation and his store of practical knowledge.

King had repeatedly pointed out that he would be a fool to try to perform the functions of a clinical veterinarian. Yet the clinical vets we had encountered had not been so prudent. They had tried to perform the functions of the pathologist, and indeed had made some very basic errors. The same point was at the core of the proliferation of all the totally wrong information that fed the mutilation phenomenon: the triumph of ignorance, presumptuousness, and lack of real understanding over good judgment, common sense, and reasonable limits. Just as the mutologists had proved to be ignorant about cows, cattle raising, and veterinary medicine, so the veterinarians who had performed pathology assays on reportedly mutilated cattle had lacked the proper knowledge to make those judgments accurately, and had presumptuously spread their erroneous, poorly supported "confirmations" around to further panic and confuse ranchers and farmers and lawmen in their regions.

The mutilation phenomenon thrived first and foremost on ignorance, and they had certainly done their part to add that factor to its momentum.

11

Tying Up Some Loose Ends

Apocrypha From Idaho

Right after Kagan's visit with John King, we were finally able to put a phone call through to Steve Watts, the Idaho State Bureau of Investigation agent who had not only proved that there was a local cult group in Idaho responsible for a few of the mutilations reported there in 1975 and 1976, but had actually infiltrated the group and identified exactly who was performing the mutilations.

Watts told us that he had been a police detective for sixteen years before he became a state investigator seven years ago.

"We're assigned to areas around the state," he told us. "We come into cases when aid is requested from local law enforcement agencies. I work the same area around Idaho Falls that I worked for years as a detective, so I've got lots of contacts here. My territory is 12,000 square miles. It includes most of eastern Idaho and the upper Snake River Valley."

Was it true that he had traced the mutilations in Idaho to local cults?

"Yeah, we infiltrated the cult, identified all the people who were doing it, but we never made an arrest. I'll tell you, twenty years ago we would have made cases against those people easily. You can't do it now, though, because of so many of the new rules of justice—probable cause and all that.

"All those incidents took place in 1975 and 1976," he said. "Through that period we had a total of several hundred reported cattle mutilations, but only a couple of dozen were even suspicious. The rest were predator damage, and there were lots of hoaxes, animals obviously cut up after death by kids."

"The phenomenon we ran into was that people were saying to us 'This is not happening.' Other law enforcement people told us there was nothing to it. We had vets here arguing, some said it was really going on, others said no."

But what a story Watts had to tell! The investigation had started not with a cattle mutilation, but with a murder and suicide.

"South of here," he explained, "a man killed his girlfriend and then committed suicide. After he killed her, he dipped his finger in her blood and drew symbols on the wall, Satanist cult stuff, inverted crosses, pentagrams, the devil's image, then he killed himself.

"We didn't know what to make of it until we were approached by a long-time acquaintance of mine, a musician in the community. He told me that the murdered woman had come to him asking for help shortly before she died. She had told him 'The guy I'm involved with is deeply into a Satanic cult. I am, too. We're killing animals and using them for rituals. I want to get out. Please help me.' He told her to get out of it any way she could. He never heard from her again. A few weeks later she was killed."

The musician had gone to Watts and given him the names the woman had given him. At the same time, the sheriff's department in the town of Saint Anthony had been getting reports of dead and mutilated small domestic animals, cats and dogs, that looked like they had been used in cult rites.

"Shortly after that," Watts said, "the reports of mutilated cattle started coming in. The eyes, an ear, and the tongue were reported missing. The ranchers in the area recognized that there was something going on. Many of them are well educated, they're not ignorant people. Some of them were state senators. They met, formed a vigilante group. We had to send one of our agents to their meeting to tone them down. We didn't want anyone getting shot.

"We were able to learn that there was a cult active in the area where the mutilation reports were coming from—the same group identified by the dead woman and by the musician.''

Watts and the other investigators decided to educate themselves about cult groups before they went any further.

''We went to Waller Wiggington, he's a professor at the University of Idaho at Pocatello. He's an expert on cults, he taught classes about them. He helped us, taught us a good deal. Most of what we came up with was loosely related to the teachings in Anton Levay's *Satanic Bible,* but Levay doesn't preach anything violent or illegal. These people here had taken off on his stuff and just got their own thing going. We found out there are as many different kinds of practices as there are local leaders. Each group does its own thing.

''We looked for common denominators among the groups here,'' Watts told us. ''We found them. All the groups were heavily into drugs. The members were all ages, from twenty up to forty or fifty. All the groups were into promiscuous and group sex, and most of the people in them had no strong religious background before they got into cult practices. All the cults practiced the desecration of Christian symbols. Some of the people who had been at initiation meetings claimed they actually called up demons.''

Watts chuckled. ''You know, we just weren't prepared to deal with finding this kind of thing all over good ole Idaho. If you're not ready for it, it's hard to accept. We had one sheriff who just refused to cooperate with the investigation. He just couldn't deal with it.''

Watts and his task force formed a central information pool on cult activity. By that time several informants had come forward and were talking with them pretty freely about the animal organs the cultists used for rituals of transmigration.

''They'd take the organ and supposedly use it to transfer power to the individual. The animal's eye was supposed to help them see the demon better, the ear was to let them hear him better, the sex organs to improve their sexual energy.''

Watts and his co-investigators also discovered that initiation rituals across the state were similar. And the ritual had some very logical reasons for its structure.

''The initiate would be picked up in a van,'' Watts said, ''and first he or she had to submit to group sex and homosexual sex. He also had to commit at least one major crime somewhere along the line, and take illegal drugs, in order to be accepted as a member. I'm pretty sure these things were required so that the cult would have a hold over the new members, something to threaten them with so they'd keep their allegiance and keep their mouths shut.''

Watts decided to infiltrate the group he knew was causing the mutilations.

''You know, you run into a problem, very heavy stuff, when you try to infiltrate a group like this. First of all, none of our cops would take the initiation rites. They all refused. I talked to the cops in Missoula, Montana, for advice. They had had experience with the same thing. They said 'Be careful. When you send an undercover man into a group like this, you often don't get him back.' It turns out that cops will actually get converted to the cult's beliefs once they're in there, or else they get really wrapped up in all the mysticism, and they end up more afraid of the cultists than of the consequences of not following through on their undercover job. They drop out and they can't do anything.''

So Watts began sending civilian infiltrators into the cult.

''We, uh, called in a couple of debts from some people that owed us, if you know what I mean,'' he explained. ''There was an ex-motorcycle gang member who owed us, and there was a businessman, so to speak, who had been into some pornography on the side, and who also had a little tax problem, and there was a young guy, a kid, he was just a vagrant, a bum, always in trouble.

''We recruited all these as infiltrators and sent them in, but we never told each one about the others, so they all thought they were the only one. Two of the guys cracked right away, gave us away to the cult and took off. Funny,'' said Watts, ''the biker and the businessman punked out, but the bum held up. He did real well.

''The guy gave us good information. He went to their ceremonies. At these things the cultists called on demons to confound their enemies. That was us. I was told that some of the ceremonies were specifically aimed at me.'' He laughed.

''This particular group used to meet right in the path where the flood waters came through when the Teton Dam broke in the summer of 1976. They had shut off their activities in October of 1975, before that disaster. They were due to perform one more cattle mutilation in the fall to get parts they needed for a ritual in the spring. Our inside man volunteered to get the parts for them.''

The idea was to have their informant set up the mutilation so that Watts and his men would be there to witness it to collect enough evidence for an arrest.

''We were never able to get that close, though,'' he explained. ''They would never let our man do the job. There was a little inner circle of special individuals in the cult who did the mutilations. They were assigned to do them, and the other members only found out about it after the job was done, so we could never get to witness one.''

In the summer of 1976, the Teton Dam broke.

''The cult took that as some kind of omen that the wrath of God was coming down on them for their cult activity. They split up, and everyone moved away. They're all gone now. And we haven't had any reports of cattle mutilations since then,'' Watts said.

Once again, they had gotten so close but not close enough, just like the RCMP.

Kagan asked him if his investigation had ever yielded any drug findings in the carcasses of animals they thought were mutilated. This was what we had been told by several people.

''Not one,'' said Watts. ''We had some political problems. We sent blood and tissue samples to our state USDA lab, but the findings all came back negative. The lab technicians all thought there was nothing to it. But the Idaho Commissioner of Law Enforcement came down hard on the lab to get them to cooperate with us, after he got some reports on tranquilizer dart guns that had been stolen from dog catchers, and several large drug thefts, including Ketamine, which we all thought was the drug they were using to take the animals down.''

Watts said the investigation had turned up scattered bits of evidence, but nothing that helped them make a solid case.

''We found some tire tracks. And we were able to explain a few cases that looked pretty strange to begin with. In one incident, the cow was found dead with no tracks around it. Weird. But then we found signs that showed the animal had been knocked down, probably with a tranquilizer, but it got up and walked away after the drug wore off and after it was mutilated. It walked a ways until it finally fell over and died. Ketamine wears off very quickly, so it would be consistent with this. And that was probably why the lab never found any drug traces, either. The stuff dissipates quickly.

''We tried to watch specific individuals we had been told about, on specific nights when we had word there might be a ritual, nights of the full moon, like that,'' he said. ''I remember sitting out there in the middle of the fields with a night scope, staked out.

''And by the way, don't believe anyone who tells you it's hard to approach cattle in the pasture. More than once I had them just walk right up to me.

''After all we did, I'm satisfied we were on the right track,'' Watts said. ''I'm positive that cult groups like this around the country are responsible for the actual mutilations.''

We asked him about UFOs.

''We had none of that here,'' Watts said. ''Just people.''

Watts said that he and other lawmen in the state still noticed signs that there were other cults still operating in Idaho, even though there were no more cattle mutilations.

''For instance, you'll see license plates with demons' names on them, stuff like that,'' he said.

''We never made that arrest. I wish we had been able to, but we never got past probable cause. The laws are simply not written for this kind of situation. We worked on it for almost a year before we knew exactly what we were looking for, and by then they were on to us.''

Watts mentioned that the press coverage of the mute reports had caused the cops a great deal of trouble. The pattern, we noticed, held, no matter where we looked.

We had read several reports of hooded, robed people, who had been taken to be cultists, who had been seen in Idaho during the period of the mutilation reports. We asked Watts about this.

''Oh yes, they were spotted here. One sheriff had an informant. He told the sheriff he was given the standard initiation treatment. He was picked up in a van and driven all around. When he got to the meeting place, all the men and women were wearing hoods and robes. There was a fire, and a circle of stones. We also got word of a group up north that wears black robes, and some of our forest service employees spotted people in the woods wearing hoods and robes. In fact, we confiscated three of those hoods from a guy we arrested for something else. I still have them.''

Something clicked for us. Hoods, robes, stone circles, 1975 and 1976, fires, mutilated cattle. The part of Idaho where all this activity took place is the eastern part of the state. It borders Montana; in fact, Idaho Falls is only 175 miles from Butte, Montana, where the cult site had been found during the Montana mutilation wave, and only 300 miles from Great Falls and its surrounding counties, where Keith Wolverton and Pete Howard had so many problems. Was it possible that similar groups had been responsible for the handful of possible real mutilations in Montana in 1975 and 1976? Or had the group that left Idaho in 1976 gone to Montana to continue taking a cow here and a cow there? After all, Wolverton's reported mutilations with the odd, serrated-looking cuts had not begun showing up until 1976, after a full year of mute publicity. Perhaps those few had actually been committed by these cultists. It was not out of the realm of possibility. The geographical and timing factors meshed nicely. It was too bad Wolverton had never gotten a reliable confirmation on the animal deaths from a pathology lab.

Halls Of Ivy, Stats Of Gauss

Not long after we spoke with Steve Watts, Kagan made one last trip, to Harvard University, to speak with a man named Dr. Matthew Meselson, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology. He is an internationally known researcher, and also happens to be one of the most knowledgeable people outside the military establishment about chemical and biological warfare. The U.S. government had recently been showing a renewed interest in activating the moribund CBW programs that had been shelved in 1970, and in the April, 1980, issue of *Scientific American*, Meselson and a co-writer, Dr. Julian Perry Robinson, had published a long article filled with scholarly, pointed, and statistical arguments against the advisability of a new chemical and biological weapons race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Kagan was ushered into a small, cluttered conference room off Meselson's office, and sat at the large, battered old wooden table.

A few minutes later Dr. Meselson bustled in. He could only give Kagan a few minutes.

When Kagan mentioned cattle mutilations to him, Meselson surprised him by immediately responding that yes, he knew all about them, had known about the reports for years in fact, since about 1973, when they first began. It turned out that Meselson had been contacted by a newspaper reporter on Long Island who had researched the phenomenon at the time.

"I first picked it up in the newspapers," he explained, "then I got a call from this reporter." Dr. Meselson said that at first he had been very much taken by the notion that the mutilations might be tied not to an experiment, but to some kind of monitoring procedure.

"The reporter told me about the sightings of helicopters, and I put this together with the idea of the mutilations as a sampling procedure, and came up with the idea of some group, possibly a government agency, that was worried about an epidemic among cattle, and that they might be taking these tissues as samples to monitor the spread of a biological agent among them. I figured it had to have happened in some negative way like the Dugway Proving Grounds accident, through a leak or an accident that released an organism into the environment. That would fit with clandestine monitoring, since they would have to be secretive to keep the public from knowing about it."

Kagan was intrigued with Meselson's quick acceptance of this kind of notion. He asked the doctor if he still thought this was a possibility.

"Well, the way it was explained to me, they were only taking tiny bits of tissue, very much like samples for lab work." When Meselson found out that the reported mutilations were not neat little surgical snippets, however, he immediately abandoned the idea that they could have anything to do with a secret monitoring operation.

Kagan asked him why had he been so quick to entertain such an idea in the first place.

"I'm very skeptical about the whole idea of chemical and biological weapons," he explained. "I think germ weapons would be a liability for us, and chemical weapons are not very efficient either."

He explained how difficult it is to target and control the effects of these weapons, and that this made them less than ideal for warfare. Chemical weapons in particular were very easy to defend against with protective clothing, masks, and decontamination equipment.

"There were lots of very messianic people involved in the biological warfare program," he said. "They thought CB weapons were the greatest thing ever to come down the road, they were going to save us all. Many of them felt that Nixon betrayed the U.S. by banning testing and research in 1970. Government officials were actually worried about what those CB warfare people might do when the programs were shut down. They were that type. They were all given excellent jobs in other agencies after the programs were shut down, mostly to keep them happy and to prevent them from doing anything clandestine and nasty with their knowledge.''

This information about CB warfare zealots was one of the planks that supported the mutologists' CB warfare theories.

Meselson, however, quickly obliterated the idea that CB warfare experiments or monitoring could be involved in cattle mutilations. Aside from the fact that virtually all but a handful of ''mutilations'' were actually only *reports* of mutilations, it was plain that if a dangerous biological agent had escaped and was affecting mammals in range country, it could eventually have affected people as well, and this hadn't happened. Also, the idea of monitoring an accidental spill held up only over a short term. The effects of a spill would last only until the agent had run its course among animals, and the continued reports of mutilations went against this conclusion. In addition, there would have been a noticeable increase in cattle deaths in the area where such a spill had taken place, and one point about the mute waves was that the average number of expected cattle deaths from natural causes *never* increased. Kagan asked the doctor what he thought of Dane Edwards's and George Erianne's Project Jerome scenario about a race-specific biological agent that would affect only the mucous membranes and eye components of Orientals.

Meselson shook his head. One of his specialties was genetics. ''There is absolutely no biological basis for the idea that there are differences in eye structure or mucous membrane structure between racial groups,'' he said. ''It's completely impossible. There are no genetic marks like that for specific races.'' He paused.

''But that doesn't mean that there wasn't some money spent somewhere along the line to research the possibility,'' he said.

Meselson then explained, in technical and quite absolute terms, why such a race-specific weapon was not only unbelievable, but completely unworkable.

''There are certain genetic traits that tend to be more common in one racial group or another,'' he said, ''but this does not mean that they are *limited* to that group. No matter how much a single

trait may predominate in one group, it will always overlap into other races. There's no specificity at all. There are certain blood types, for instance, that tend to dominate given racial groups. There tend to be more people of a specific blood type in that group than of any other blood type. But the blood type does show up, and often frequently, in all other racial groups. All traits overlap from race to race. In statistical terms, it's called a Gaussian distribution. In each racial group, the frequency of a particular trait will rise to an average distribution and then fall away, and where it falls away it overlaps the other racial groups. It's impossible to separate out any one trait that occurs only in one group.''

So much for Project Jerome and the CBW theories of cattle mutilation.

The Alamosa Incident

Over the weeks of the autumn, information kept dribbling into our offices. We received a tip that a big conference on cattle mutilations had been held. It turned out that Linda Howe, now apparently making her bid for leadership of the mutology network by using her clout as a TV personality and the operating budget she had from KMGH, had organized a secret conference to try to boost flagging public interest in the UFO interpretations of the cattle mutilation phenomenon. She had invited Dr. J. Allen Hyneck of the Center for UFO Studies in Illinois to attend.

The conference turned out to be a gathering of the UFO core of the mutology underground in the most symbolic place imaginable: a cabin on the property of Beryl Lewis, the owner of the infamous Snippy the horse. The participants had been Howard and Lovola Burgess, Linda Howe, Beryl Lewis, Dr. Leo Sprinkle, and Tom Adams and his alter ego Gary Massey, along with Dr. Hyneck from CUFOS.

''It was Linda's preference that it not be discussed,'' Adams explained to us. Howe's purpose for the meeting had been twofold: first, to try to interest Hyneck in putting the endorsement of his Center for UFO Studies behind the UFO solution to cattle mutilations, and second, to plan a larger, national mutologist conference that Howe would sponsor for the express purpose of filming it. Howe would tack the conference footage onto the existing ''Strange Harvest'' to update it, presumably so it could be shown yet again.

Linda Howe was finally making her move. Her real goal was showing quite blatantly. It did not matter whether her "investigating" produced reliable information. What mattered was how Linda Howe would benefit from cattle-mutilations and UFOs.

She was investing copious amounts of time and energy in "Strange Harvest," and it was clear that she thought it would be some kind of earthshaking revelation. What was amazing was that KMGH was letting her get away with it.

S.F.P.D.

As the fall ran into winter, rumors and isolated reports seeped in to us. No one but the mutologists seemed very interested in mutilations anymore. The crest of public fascination with it had passed in 1975 in Colorado, and had been briefly resuscitated with Senator Schmitt's conference and the Rommel investigation in 1979 and 1980. The press, with the exception of mutilation journalists like Dorothy Aldridge, had other things to do. The mutilation phenomenon appeared, in fact, to be dying.

The police, however, probably because of the RCMP's insistence that they had some cult activity causing a few mutes in Alberta, still kept a watchful eye on cult activity.

In Missouri in early October, police had started investigating the reason for someone's digging up a 100-year-old grave in an abandoned cemetery plot near St. Joseph. A few weeks after the grave was found, a young boy discovered a cave near the cemetery whose walls were covered with inverted crosses and other signs that it had been used for some kind of cult rites, possibly Satanic in nature. Ashes were found in the cave, indicating that a ritual might have taken place there. Several people in the area reported seeing figures dressed in robes or sheets in the vicinity "chanting in a ritual-like fashion."*

The Missouri sheriff in charge then told the press that his department had received a thick information file from the San Francisco Police which had been recently distributed to many police departments across the country. The San Francisco Police were investigating what seemed to be a cult group headquartered in their city, whose members traveled around the country in small groups of ten to fifteen people and were believed to be performing blood rituals, including animal—and possibly human—mutilations.

Here was one more strike to support the involvement of cult groups in the few actual cattle mutilations that had taken place around the country. We contacted Joe Motsinger and Gabe Valdez and learned that both of them had also received copies of the Frisco police file. Unfortunately, the file was confidential police material, and neither of them could send us copies of it. We needed that file however, and after a few weeks of phone calls to our sources around the country, one of our people finally came through with a copy of the entire file in late November.

The thick stack of papers was topped by a standard police teletype notice of the kind that is routinely broadcast to police agencies around the country in urgent cases:

"This department is currently conducting investigations into satanic cults which may be involved in animal mutilations and ritualistic homicides of human beings, wherein internal organs are removed from the victims and used in church baptisms and rituals.

"We are also interested in suspicious deaths wherein the victim was believed to be involved in cult activities. This particular group is known to travel throughout the country in small bands of 10-15 people, either by foot or in vans and wagons. They prey on young adults 15-30 years [of age]."

There were several responses to the teletype, from police officers in different parts of the country. These supported what we had unearthed about the widespread existence of cult groups that probably had been involved in the small number of actual cattle mutilations.

From an Oregon city police department: "[White Male] 18 years advises he was approached in a shopping mall by a group called the Gray Witches. They wanted him to go to Colorado. Allegedly, the group was involved in animal mutilations and they were talking about human sacrifices . . . In 1977, Harney County, Oregon, had a series of animal mutilations."

From California: "Satanic cult according to a source is involved in animal sacrifice and wanted to get into human sacrifice."

There was even a response from our own Joe Motsinger in Iowa, detailing the reported mutilations there, along with the cult connection.

From Los Angeles: "Group called Santeria involved in ritualistic animal mutilations . . ."

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*Kansas City, Mo., *Times*, October 7, 1980.

There was a response from Gabe Valdez, still pushing the idea of aircraft being used in mutilations.

In the file was a memorandum from the undercover officer who had been investigating the particular group the San Francisco police were interested in, to the commanding officer of the division. It had plenty of detail.

The cult was known as the Christ Family, and supposedly had from 800 to 2,000 members nationwide. The leader's name was Brother Jesus Christ Lightning Amen. They were known to be operating in Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Hawaii, Canada, Florida, and the East Coast. Lightning Amen "alleges to be Jesus Christ," said the report.

There followed a list of names of known members and a list of the descriptions and license numbers of the cars and trucks owned by the group. "Christ Family members drive either dark brown or dark green vans, trucks and cars, usually with their Star of David emblem," it said and noted that they traveled around the country, and that they wore white robes.

"Reliable sources state that in the past year or so the trend of this group had gone from relative passivity to one responsible for numerous bizarre happenings. Christ Family members are known to be heavily into drugs such as LSD, PCP . . .

"Numerous sources now indicate that Christ Family members have taken the usual progression of a cult, from a quasi-religious group to a bizarre, Satanic movement. There is also speculation that members may be involved in ritualistic killings of animals and human beings. The following information is being included in this report, due to this speculation, however, it must be noted that *there is no evidence directly connecting these incidents to the Christ Family at this time*." (Italics ours)

There followed summaries of four gruesome case histories reminiscent of *Jay's Journal*, that involved people who had been entangled with various cults in several states that appeared to be segments of the Christ Family. There were suicides and apparent murders.

There were police reports from several states on the cult's activities, along with pictures of the members and of their vehicles. The reports had come from Colorado, Florida, and Washington, D.C. The cops had ascertained that the group maintained residences in Indiana, Florida, and Illinois. The file also contained several police reports of incidents involving local cults that did not seem to be connected in any way with the Christ Family.

The San Francisco police file was essentially inconclusive regarding cattle mutilations, but it confirmed once again that the entire country was awash in marginal cult groups, many of them Satanic, and most of them involving fanatical, unquestioning allegiance either to the devil or to an individual who claimed to be divine and demanded complete compliance from his followers. The information bolstered the impression we had gotten from *Jay's Journal* that cult activity was widespread, that many cult members knew of and spoke about committing cattle mutilations, and that there were in fact hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these local groups that could easily have been responsible for the small number of actually mutilated animals throughout the country.

One Star Ascending Over The Little Red Schoolhouse

In November of 1980, Don Rystrom won the election for sheriff in Benton County, Arkansas. The *phenomenon* seemed to have settled into a kind of low-keyed, constant, but undramatic presence.

Gabe Valdez never sent Dr. King those samples of the two "mutilations" he had "confirmed" last July.

The *Stigmata* for the first quarter of 1981 arrived in our office. Tom Adams was still going strong, still insisting that the mutes were hot news, big news, and a matter of national concern.

Stigmata number 12 continued to push Adams's "silent siege" theory. It contained nothing but a list of "mutilations" reported in 1980 around the country. There were a total of ninety cases. With the exception of the Keota, Iowa, calf which had been confirmed by Dr. Andrews at Iowa State University, *not a single one of the cases had been reliably confirmed as unusual or surgical by a pathologist, or even a veterinarian*. Leafing through the *Stigmata*, we discovered something else.

Of the ninety cases listed, fully thirty-one of them had been collected, reported by, and credited to Linda Moulton Howe, KMGH-TV, Denver. Over one third of Adams's information had come from her. Most important, though, Howe had apparently blossomed into as much of a mutologist as she was a TV producer. It was obvious from the extent to which Tom Adams, the Father of Mutology, now depended on Linda Howe as a source of information, that her influence in the mute network was increasing month by month.

By the time *Stigmata* number 13, for the second quarter of 1981, arrived in our mailbox, it was clear that the loss of public and media interest in the mutilation mystery was having severe effects on the core of the mutology network. The mutologists had begun to huddle tightly together, to concentrate their theories, notions, and delusions on each other. With number 13, Tom Adams announced that from this point onward the newsletter would contain a regular feature, "The A.M.P. Report," writings about cattle mutilations by none other than David Perkins. Apparently, commercial magazines were no longer interested in publishing Perkins's long articles about cattle mutilations.

Stigmata 13 also contained eight lengthy accounts of reported mutilations from 1980, fleshed out in robust, but completely unsubstantiated, detail. Of the eight cases, seven of them had been unearthed, "investigated," and reported on by Linda Moulton Howe who, with this issue, was now supplying *Stigmata* with more than five-sixths of its contents, up from almost one-third last issue. It really looked as though no one but Adams, Perkins, and Howe was interested in mutes any more.

V. INVISIBLE GEOGRAPHY

"But the lack is not in intelligence, which is in plentiful supply; rather the scarce commodity is systematic training in critical thinking."
Carl Sagan, Broca's Brain

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Navigating The Unseen Heartland

The New Scientist

It would be a gross oversimplification to blame the entire existence of the mutilation phenomenon on the little tribe of mutologists. They did not start the phenomenon per se. The mute mystery needed a fertile environment in which to breed; ready minds, many thousands of them; and just the right social, psychological, and political climate in which to spread.

This was the same climate in which the pseudoscientific teachings of the UFO establishment had been flourishing for decades. Since the mutology underground was nothing but a crew of UFO buffs who had branched out to specialize in cattle mutilations, it made sense that they used exactly the same systematic nonlogic to generate their ideas that the UFO establishment used to build its position. It also made sense that, since so much of the public easily swallowed the UFO formulations, they had just as easily swallowed the mute mystery line.

One reason why so many people readily accept UFOlogist/mutologist reasoning is that it superficially resembles classical scientific thinking. James Oberg wrote an elegant piece in the October 11, 1979, issue of *New Scientist* titled "The Failure of the 'Science' of Ufology." It presents an airtight criticism of the abuses of logical analysis practiced by the UFO subculture.

UFOlogists, he writes, simply invert accepted rules of logic in order to justify the existence of UFOs and space people.

"It is clearly not logical to base the existence of a positive ('True UFOs exist') on the grounds of a hypothetical negative ('No matter what the effort, some UFO reports cannot be explained.')."

This was a perfect parallel for the arguments of the mutology network. Their entire case for a bizarre cause for the mutilations was based on the same use of a hypothetical negative to "prove" a positive. What else was the assertion that because the police cannot solve the mute mystery (hypothetical negative), it is therefore true that there must be a cause beyond the realm of ordinary occurrence? In fact, the mutologists' argument was even weaker than the UFO argument: it was simply not true that the police had failed to solve the mutilation mystery. They had solved it, but the mutologists and much of the public had not *accepted* those solutions.

It's not difficult to see why, under the twisted guise of "scientific endeavor," the mutology line was able to suck in so many people, including some otherwise sharp police investigators and skeptical ranchers. There is no slur on those who swallowed the cattle mutilation myth based on these "theories." Most of us are unfamiliar with the subtle intricacies of scientific thought, do not recognize it when we see it, and are easily fooled by something that looks and sounds very much like it. Carl Sagan captured the problem nicely in *Broca's Brain:*

"There is a vast untapped popular interest in the deepest scientific questions. For many people, the shoddily thought out doctrines of borderline science [i.e., mutology] are the closest approximation to comprehensible science readily available. The popularity of borderline science is a rebuke to the schools, the press and commercial television for their sparse, unimaginative and ineffective efforts at science education."

A Lesson From Atlanta

But what happens, we wondered, when there are *real* crimes as evocative and terrifying as the reported cattle mutilations, and the police genuinely cannot solve them?

We looked for a demonstration case, an ordinary mass murder that the cops could not crack, which had captured the attention of the public, invaded the media, and ignited a mood of fear across a large region. If such a case turned out to generate the same effects the mute phenomenon had, it would be clear that bizarre rumors, strange theories, and contagious mass delusions were inevitable outcomes when a terrified population was confronted with unsolved grisly crimes.

Between the summer of 1979 and mid-1981, twenty-eight black children were abducted and murdered in and around Atlanta, Georgia. There was nothing remotely paranormal about the murders. For two years the police could not catch the killer. During this entire period the case received intense scrutiny from the media, and the community of Atlanta became progressively more angry, frustrated, and panic-stricken. Throughout this escalating outrage, the Atlanta case slowly but surely developed several elements that paralleled, with an almost uncanny exactness, aspects of the mute phenomenon.

By the beginning of 1981, the failure of the Atlanta police to solve the murders had had several effects. Public faith in the authorities was shaken, just as it was in the cattle mutilation cases. Expert detectives from major cities were called. Psychics were consulted. Still, no one could crack the case, but there was no talk of government conspiracy or saucer people because all the elements of the case, its insolubility, the failure of a claimant to come forward for a reward, are common events, not signs of supernormal causation.

Soon, though, the Atlanta case began to spin off some effects that were chillingly similar to what grew out of the cattle mutilation panic. The Atlanta police were deluged with letters from psychics, seers, and soothsayers, just like the local authorities during the mute waves. The city became gripped by fear, children carried weapons, vigilante patrols were formed, just like the ranchers when facing the same kinds of unknown threats.

Finally, the FBI got involved in the case, and in April, 1981, an FBI agent publicly announced that the Bureau had established that four of the children had been murdered by their own parents because they were considered "nuisances." The Atlanta police became enraged, straining interagency relations. This, of course, was exactly what happened between the local sheriffs and the CBI in Colorado in 1975. It was from this animosity that the first accusations of a government cover-up in the cattle mutilations sprang.

The Atlanta illustration makes it clear that this kind of friction will *always* occur when a well-funded, large police agency is called in to aid a local police department with a problem that is beyond its resources. It's a matter of politics and pride, not the indication of a bizarre conspiracy.

During the last weeks of April, 1981, a final element cropped up in the Atlanta cases, sealing its similarity to the mute mystery. Roy Innis, the national chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality, exploded into Atlanta and publicly announced that CORE had conducted an independent investigation of the Atlanta murders, and that he knew exactly who was committing the crimes. He dramatically gave the Atlanta police a deadline for arresting that person, and threatened to do it himself if they did not. He accused the Atlanta police of failing to act on the leads he had given them, and of failing to interview the informant he had used.

Within a few days it was revealed that the Atlanta police had in fact investigated all of Innis's claims and found them without merit. They found that his informant was not as reliable as Innis claimed, and that much of her information was inaccurate. It turned out that what Innis the amateur considered to be damning evidence could not stand strict testing against accepted legal and investigative standards. His "evidence" was insufficient, inaccurate, and incomplete, just as the mutologists' had been. And he had been given a media pulpit from which to shout his bogus claims because the public was desperate for an answer, just as the mutologists had been given one for the same reason.

There is also one crucial difference between the Atlanta murders and the mute phenomenon. The Atlanta murders were *real* crimes: the mutes are for the most part nonexistent. But this shows how powerful a role public psychology plays. Since the same factors were at work in both cases, it's clear that *it does not matter whether or not the crimes actually occurred*. All that matters is that enough people *believe* the crimes are real. All these effects have nothing at all to do with the crime. They are contained solely in the public's *reaction* to it.

> *"Those who cannot remember the*
> *past are condemned to repeat it."*
> *George Santayana*

A widespread kind of historical amnesia is another aspect of the national climate that was so conducive to the growth of the mute phenomenon. The mutologists, and apparently everyone else, seem to have been completely unaware that seemingly bizarre occurrences like the mute phenomenon have a long history.

No one likes to admit it, but we are terribly susceptible to this kind of hysterical spark. The fact that we are so repulsed by this tendency in ourselves is probably the reason why we will do almost anything to avoid admitting it, and it's precisely this failure to admit our weakness that helps perpetuate phenomena like the cattle mutilations. And once a delusion like this gathers some momentum we're even more loath to take responsibility for our part in it.

Our recent technological and scientific advances and our sophisticated social attitudes probably make us even more susceptible to these delusions because we've allowed ourselves to think we've evolved past the point where we're capable of raw, illogical, irrational belief in implausible events. We figure that if we can be made to believe it, it *must* be scientific.

The overwhelming power of the modern news media also makes us more susceptible than our "ignorant" forbears to delusions like the mute phenomenon. It could never have existed on the scale it did without the local TV stations blaring mute reports to all the residents of an entire region, or without the unsupported "news" written by Dorothy Aldridge and Gail Olson, or without the flying saucer propaganda of Linda Howe. It could not have leapt from state to state without coverage from national media like *Newsweek* and the large newspapers in cities across the country. It's unfortunate, but most people still assume that because something appears in print or on TV that it must be true as told.

Once a mass delusion reaches a certain level of momentum, the notion of proof of its central assumptions ceases to play an important part. The extent, the pervasiveness of the delusion, its very existence becomes the proof that it is a legitimate issue. This is exactly what happened with cattle mutilations.

After the delusion has been accepted as real, more subtle effects take hold. Once people had made the assumption that there *were* cattle mutilations and that there was something bizarre about them, their perceptions followed their beliefs. They began to see "evidence" where there was none, because they had assumed evidence would be there. They began to read meaning into meaningless events. Howard Burgess probably classified the Gomez bull's liver as the outcome of microwave damage because he had *already decided* that it was a weird mutilation. He projected information into the carcass that was not there. So did Gabe Valdez. And so did all the experienced ranchers who saw surgery where there was only scavenger damage.

Another factor which historically will energize a mass delusion is the emotional value of its subject, an issue which carries a powerful emotional charge: money, religion, power. The ranchers got sucked in so deeply because its central subject, cattle, was one of immense significance to them. Their country newspapers and TV are also acutely tuned to the emotional, economic, and social significance of cattle. So it is not surprising that a delusion like the mutilation phenomenon took root so deeply there. By accepting cattle mutilations as a real issue, all these people had accepted the existence of a threat to their entire social and economic system. No wonder they reacted with such fear. No wonder they would not let go of the delusion, even in the face of repeated proof that it was not really happening.

The Wild Man

There is another strong psychological force which plays a crucial role in explaining why so many people so easily accepted the idea of mysteriously caused cattle mutilations: it is our need to create for ourselves an "otherness," something separate from ourselves, with which we then interact. This "other" can be another person, a pet, or a spiritual entity like God or Jesus. It can be an idea, or a social institution, or the company we work for, the local political structure or the Federal government. It can even be an impersonal force that acts on us, like Fate, Luck, the weather, or the economy.

We simply find it very difficult to understand anything without forming a self-and-other relationship to make it accessible to us. And we are at a loss to comprehend events of any kind unless we can somehow identify an "other," preferably another human being or human institution, which we can name as the cause. When that's impossible, we invoke non-human "others," perhaps deities, and we invest them with humanlike traits and attribute cause to them. Given any chance at all, we will formulate an "other," especially to blame for an unhappy event. This need seriously influences our perceptions. We call an earthquake or a flood an "act of God." What else is God but simply a different kind of "other"? If we attribute events to Luck or Fate, what else are they but non-human "others"? UFOs and extraterrestrials are also "others," and there are many people who unhesitatingly name them as the causes of unexplainable events. Government conspiracies are also "others," and are invoked in the same way.

This is exactly the reason why so many otherwise sensible people so easily accepted the mutology theories about UFOs, space aliens, and secret conspiracies as the cause of the supposedly mysterious cattle mutilations. All these theories offered "others" on which to pin the events, and so they meshed nicely with a deep need. Also, no one could accept the explanation that the mute phenomenon rested on mass delusion because then they would have had to accept that in fact the "other" behind the mysterious mutilations was not an "other" at all but themselves, the working of their own minds, influenced by rumor, fear, and media sensationalism. No one likes to admit they've been had, especially when they've been had by themselves.

Our tendency to manufacture and accept imaginary "others" as causes for events is not an abstract psychological construct. It is strongly linked to our other tendency to create myths and symbols that reflect the themes, concerns, and problems of our society. We make myths to objectify actual or psychological forces at work on us. The cattle mutilation phenomenon is such a symbolic myth, and it starkly reflects several powerful forces which have been at work on American society over the past decade.

Nixon, Nukes, Arabs, And Inflation

> "Though visionary rumors may be caused or accompanied by all manner of outward circumstances, they are based essentially on an omnipresent emotional foundation. . . . The basis for this kind of rumor is an *emotional tension* having its cause in a situation of collective stress or danger, or in a vital psychic need. . . .
>
> "The logical result is an insatiable hunger for anything extraordinary. If we add to this the great defeat of human reason, daily demonstrated in the newspapers and rendered even more menacing by the incalculable dangers of the

hydrogen bomb, the picture that unfolds before us is one of universal spiritual distress. . . ."

Carl Jung, *Flying Saucers*

Myths like the cattle mutilation phenomenon are functional mirrors of the concerns of the citizens of a given society at a specific time, and tend to arise during periods of external tension and doubt. These periods of tension and doubt historically occur when a society's central social, religious, and political institutions are seen by the people as dangerously flawed, malfunctioning, threatening instead of helpful, and failing to function in their roles as just, ordering forces in society.

One does not have to be a savant to be aware that these conditions have existed in America with particular intensity for about the past ten years. It is no accident that the cattle mutilation myth appeared and gained wide acceptance during the same period, because the mute phenomenon contains and expresses, point for point, every large source of fear and anxiety at work on the average American.

Perhaps the best place to begin is with the Viet Nam War.

Viet Nam revealed to us that some of our basic institutions and beliefs were not only fallible, but dangerously misguided, ineffective, and in some cases downright criminal. During the war we discovered that our political and military leaders were capable of immense self-delusion and bald displays of public mendacity. They lied to us about the reasons for the war, and about events during the war. They seduced us through our faith in democratic justice and told us we were defending freedom, when in fact we were propping up a corrupt dictatorship.

The virtues of technology, a literal article of religious faith in America, also failed us completely in Viet Nam. With all our sophisticated weaponry, we lost a war for the first time in our history, and it stung our national confidence to the heart, doubly so because most of us doubted whether we should have even been in that war in the first place.

In 1972 and 1973, Watergate undercut our faith in the most holy of our secular religious beliefs: the integrity of democratically elected government. We learned that petty and self-serving adventurism could sit in the White House, and that our president and his staff would easily stoop to burglary, wiretapping, domestic espionage, and perjury, and would then lie about it. A vice president of the United States could be bought with a paltry bribe of a few thousand dollars.

In 1973, the first Arab oil embargo showed us that, far from being an invulnerable citadel of independent strength, we were in fact at the mercy of foreigners who could strangle our transportation and manufacturing systems just because they felt like it. At the same time it became clear that our own oil companies were playing the situation to their advantage and making profits while the rest of us shivered or stood in line for gas that had suddenly doubled in price. Our belief in the fundamental positive nature of big business suddenly degenerated into a spasm of suspicion and mistrust.

During the early 1970s our economy began a series of precipitous downward slides. Inflation began to accelerate. We began to worry about the integrity of yet another of our cherished national institutions, the competitive capitalist economic system. Was it beginning to fail?

By the late 1970s there were even more things to fear about our own society. The tons of toxic wastes buried by the Hooker Chemical Company in Love Canal leaked into the homes that had been built on top of them. Other horror stories about toxic industrial wastes dumps emerged, and they continue to come, too fast for comfort. Our concern with environmental damage suddenly took a leap to outright fear. What were our own corporations doing to us?

The reactor accident at Three Mile Island in 1979 underscored for Americans the fallibility of another of our cherished national beliefs: the inherent goodness of scientific progress and technological advancement. It was suddenly clear that nuclear power was not so safe, no matter what the government told us, and that high technology might be our end instead of our salvation.

By the time the end of 1979 rolled around, inflation was in double digits, the crime rate was soaring, and the CIA had failed to predict the downfall of the Shah of Iran. Fifty-two American citizens were held hostage for over a year. When our military tried to rescue them, they crashed their aircraft into each other and never even reached Teheran. The mighty U.S.A. could not even conduct a simple commando raid. What the hell was going on?

The newspapers told us our cherished Social Security system, the ultimate lifeline for many of us, might go bust. Our heavy industries could not match the output or quality of the Japanese.

Chrysler almost went under. Our European allies bargained with the Russians at cross-purposes to our aims, and the Atlantic Alliance began to look shaky. Reports from our national testing services told us that our children were becoming a generation of semi-illiterates. Generals notified us that the soldiers in our volunteer army were too ill-educated to operate complex new weaponry, and the soldiers answered that they needed food stamps to stay alive. Our cities faced bankruptcy. Abscam confirmed our suspicions that our trusted elected officials were all incipient crooks.

On top of this, a tremendous spiritual crisis had developed, and we found ourselves in a profound state of spiritual hunger. The traditional Judeo-Christian wellsprings did not seem to be giving us what we needed, so we began to search for some kind of connection with the divine. During the 1970s hordes of gurus and spiritual leaders descended on us and packed our largest auditoriums and sports arenas with sellout crowds. Totalitarian messiah cults sprang up, and our children flocked to them to be brainwashed into robotic acolytes. The mass suicides in Jonestown in 1978 revealed exactly how desperate we had become for spiritual connectedness, how our need was so great that it could blind us to madmen claiming to carry the word of God.

We had developed a severe *need to believe* in something, anything that held a shade of divinity, superior hope beyond the world we saw betraying us.

A quick glance at the theories for the possible causes behind the cattle mutilations reveals one common thread that runs through all of them. With the exception of predator damage and copycats and hoaxers, *every* theory, explanation, and hypothesis is constructed around a core that turns out to be some source of doubt, fear, or deeply disturbing controversy in our society over the past ten years.

What do the theories offer? Cults? Here is our fear of strange, incomprehensible religions and practices, sparked by images of robed fourteen-year-old Indian "holy men" with millions of followers, by tales of abduction and deprogramming of Moonies, of Satanists in black robes, of practices that further undermine and challenge our already shaken faith in the American model of Christian democracy. Of course, this attributed cause for the mutilations happens to be true, in part, but it cropped up early in mutilation waves even when there was no evidence to support it, indicating how deeply it reflects our fear of alien practices flourishing where we used to think the U.S. Constitution, the Bible, and the assembly line were the spiritual symbols of our age.

Secret CB warfare experiments? Here is the mythic embodiment of our loss of trust in our military and our government. If they could be responsible for Dugway and could feed LSD to innocent soldiers, why couldn't they be mutilating cattle? Here was the myth made flesh. This theory is a perfect reflection of our inner doubt about the trustworthiness of our own military and security institutions.

Radiation and pollutant monitoring? Here, again, a major fear of the age, death and disease for ourselves and our children from fatal negligence and then cover-ups by the military, the government, and industry, has become embodied as a mythic cause for the cattle mutilations.

Mineral prospecting? Are the mining conglomerates any more trustworthy than the oil companies? In some cases they are the same outfits. They strip-mine away our land, they spill the oil from their tankers onto our beaches, and we do not trust them anymore. Here is our fear and suspicion of mining and energy conglomerates mythologized into a villainous "other."

Psychological warfare? The Pentagon Papers did us in. The Church Committee hearings broke our hearts. We no longer trust the CIA, the NSA, the Army. They have spied on us, manipulated us, betrayed our rights. Here is our doubt and fear of these institutions projected into imagined solid form. Here is myth in action.

Extraterrestials in UFOs? Cattle-mutilating space brothers mythically embody our spiritual reaching for someone to save us from the real fears under which we labor. They are testing our intelligence with the cattle mutilations mystery, to see if we are ready. By invoking them we project and externalize all that we wish to discredit about our own lives: war, nuclear weapons, destruction of the environment, dangerous chemical and radioactive wastes. Of course, this is also the keystone for the UFO mythology, apart from its connection with the cattle mutilation phenomenon. The invocation of military and government conspiracies as the cause of mysterious cattle mutilations also supports this symbolic self-denigration of our failures, a perfect example of the functioning of a myth.

Paranormal, parapsychological, paraphysical causes for cattle mutilations are also mythic "others" that contain our sublimated spiritual and devotional needs. Human beings have always been prone to magical thinking and wishfulness. We will never lose this tendency, no matter how sophisticated we become. There are an awful lot of us who are unskeptical, gullible, and uncritical. When these tendencies are coupled to the mythic magnet of the symbolic value of these kinds of causes for the cattle mutilations, it's easy to see why so many people easily accepted them.

Most striking is that even the chronology of the development of the cattle mutilation myth exactly parallels the ebb and flow of the forces of doubt, fear, and disillusionment at work on our society. There is virtually a one-to-one correspondence between the appearance of a new source of doubt and fear and an upsurge in belief in the cattle mutilations as a bizarre phenomenon. The concordance is so impressive that it would be accurate to say that the mute report waves are a direct barometer of blows to American self-confidence.

The cattle mutilation phenomenon first began to manifest itself with real force and wide acceptance in 1973 and 1974 throughout Nebraska, Kansas, and South Dakota. It started in the spring of 1973, at the height of the Watergate revelations. It continued through the fall of 1973, boosted by the fears and anxieties generated by the Arab oil embargo. It continued through 1974, still riding on the shocks of Watergate, and reached its peak in the late summer of 1974, almost exactly at the same time as Richard Nixon's televised resignation.

Coincidence? The chronology of the rest of the mute phenomenon says no. The cattle mutilation myth reached its fullest manifestation and widest public acceptance in Colorado in 1975, and at the same time in Montana, Oklahoma, and Idaho. It began in Colorado in June, two months after our televised Viet Nam pullout in April. This is a bit too close to be an accident.

It was during the 1975 wave that the mystery helicopter sightings began, and they were from then on linked to cattle mutilations. The helicopter was also one of the predominant symbols of Viet Nam combat, tattooed onto our consciousness as a sophisticated engine of destruction by ten years of TV war coverage. Helicopters also figured prominently in the films of the pullout aired in April 1975, a subtle and powerful mythological link. The symbol of death and destruction from Viet Nam was absorbed, within weeks, as a symbol of death and destruction in the cattle mutilation phenomenon. There was another neat correspondence here: since the helicopter was a symbol of *military* destruction, it fell together with all the theories about military conspiracies behind the cattle mutilations.

Nineteen seventy-five was also the year that intelligence agency conspiracy theories made a forceful entry into the mute myth, coincident with the revelations of the Church Committee hearings concerning the CIA.

Significantly, there was relatively little cattle mutilation myth activity during 1976, the bicentennial year. It would not be unreasonable to conclude that the fears and doubts that found their expression in the mute myth were overshadowed, cooled, by the year-long reaffirmation of American history and confidence.

The next major flurry of public obsession with cattle mutilations took place during 1978 and the spring of 1979. Predictably, the waves in these years were smaller and less spectacular than those of 1973, 1974, and 1975. This was because there were no domestic events as catastrophic as Watergate, the oil embargo, the Nixon resignation, and the Viet Nam pullout to spark deep fears that needed to find an intense expression through the mute myth. There were enough sources of deep anxiety, however, to keep the myth alive. Through 1978 the economy worsened and unemployment rose to record levels, and late in the year there was the Jonestown horror, another unprecedented shock to Americans' sense of reality.

Myths reflect the anxieties of the age through symbols that objectify and physicalize the fears of people. This consistency held even in the Canadian mute waves. The mute myth crossed the border into Canada in 1979 and reappeared there again in 1980. Both times the reports were concentrated in the province of Alberta, around Calgary. Not coincidentally, it was during precisely this period that Alberta began undergoing catastrophic changes. Almost overnight, oil strikes had made Alberta rich, and Calgary was jerked out of its comfortable identity as a slow-moving cattle town into a burgeoning industrial and urban center.

The province of Alberta was thrust into being a keystone of energy supplies for all of Canada, but Albertans wanted to keep their independence. They also wanted to keep their money: they did not want to share their oil revenues with the Dominion's tax collectors. Many Albertans felt they were being exploited. There was even talk of secession.

In fact, there were rumbles of dissolution and the cracking of the old order all across Canada in 1979 and 1980. The constitution was up for revision, and there were bitter political battles over this. The Quebec separatists made an electoral bid in 1980, trying for a vote to secede from the other provinces. Things got so bad that the prime minister gave up and quit his job.

What greater fear do nations have than civil war and secession? What greater blow is there to the confidence of a nation than the resignation of its leader? What greater stimuli are there to doubt traditional institutions, what stronger spurs to deep anxiety and fear?

It was no wonder cattle mutilation reports cropped up in Alberta at exactly the same time these stresses were taxing Canadians. The mute myth was a natural there, as it had been in the U.S. The fact that there were a handful of actual cult animal mutilations mixed in was really of no consequence. Once the mute myth hit Alberta, almost no one paid any attention to the RCMP's cult findings. Everyone was more interested in the mythic projections about UFOs and secret conspiracies.

These concordances between real events and upsurges of the mute myth are not the only proofs of the phenomenon's mythic function. There are others, and these also explain its appeal and wide acceptance.

Northrop Frye once observed that myths are designed to challenge the extremes of human possibility, the ideal of freedom and redemption on the one hand, and the threat of oppression and damnation on the other. The cattle mutilation myth holds true to this. Representing freedom and redemption are the UFO aliens who are believed to be preparing us, through the conundrum of mutilated cattle, for their messianic appearance. The mythic forces of oppression and damnation are represented by the theories about secret CB warfare experiments, mineral prospecting, psychological warfare, and pollutant monitoring. All of these imagined causes are entities which threaten us in the real world.

The mutilation myth also conforms exactly to the basic foundation of the American social and cultural system: Christian dualism. It merely replaces one set of symbols with another, while preserving the structure intact. The UFO extraterrestrials have replaced God or Jesus as the good, all-knowing, all-saving, all-delivering superior consciousness. The Devil is represented by the military, the government, and the corporate sphere. The myth is flexible enough to let adherents pick either as the cause for the mutes, depending on their point of view. Interestingly, the dead cows in this case might represent *us*, caught at the nexus of the old dilemma, awash in confusion. The cows are helpless, overpowered, literally torn apart, ultimately dead, passive, and powerless, unable to control whether they are a sign of good or a container for evil.

There is one last aspect of the cattle mutilation phenomenon which probably best explains its appeal, and also firmly demonstrates exactly how it functions as an American myth. We had stumbled across it months before when we noticed the difference between the cattle *mutilations* and the cattle mutilation *phenomenon*.

The revelation was this: *At bottom, the cattle mutilation phenomenon had nothing at all to do with the dead cows*. The cows were superfluous. The phenomenon was really about the mythologized symbolic *causes* for the dead cows. The dead animals were nothing but a stimulus, an entryway, almost an excuse for people to become involved with the mythologized "others" they believed were causing the deaths: UFOs, conspirators, the government, corporate devils, the military. This was why once the mute phenomenon appeared in an area, the press, the public, the ranchers, and, most significantly, the mutologists and mutilation journalists paid almost no attention to the condition of the dead animals and instead became obsessed with the mythic agents they might be able to blame for them. This made perfect sense, since the "others," the *causes*, carry all the symbolic freight that make the myth work.

Their psychological need for a mythical expression for their own fears was greater than their need for the truth. This was why Valdez never sent those samples to John King at Cornell, why they so quickly invested amateur analysis with such gravity, and why Linda Howe dragged everyone under the sun to the Blake horse *except* a pathologist.

Myths are a powerful source of deep psychological comfort to those who believe in them. Myths make an incomprehensible and frightening world appear safer and more ordered. Believers will instinctively avoid anything that challenges the sovereignty of their myth because they need that myth to explain reality.

The odds are that the cattle mutilation phenomenon will continue indefinitely in its diminished form. The reason is obvious: the fears and distress that are embodied in the mythical "others" projected as causes for the mutes will still be with us, and they will still need an outlet. Even if the mute myth disappears, something similar will rise to take its place. Ultimately, there is no difference between a feverish mutologist, grandiosely postulating secret military testing programs or hoping for the advent of UFO angels from space to save us all, the rancher who suddenly feels the need to lock his doors after finding a dead cow in his pasture, and a terrified Pleistocene man cowering in a hole in the ground during a thunderstorm, convinced that the crashing explosions from the sky and the lancing bolts of lightning are signs of anger from the mythical rain god whom he has somehow offended.

DANIEL KAGAN

Daniel Kagan was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., on July 11, 1949, and raised in Fair Lawn, N.J. He graduated from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., in 1973. Kagan has made his living as a rock and roll singer, a correctional officer, a technical coordinator for ABC TV news, the managing director of a traveling theatre, the publisher of his own local newspaper, a magazine and book editor, and writer. He has lectured at The New School for Social Research in New York and has appeared on radio and television in New York and other parts of the country. His work has appeared in *Penthouse* and *Science And Living Tomorrow.*

This is his first book. He lives in Manhattan with his wife Valerie and their two cats, Alphonso and Rosie. He is currently at work on a book about the survivalist movement.

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Ian Summers is the author/packager of *The Art of the Brothers Hildebrandt* (Ballantine), *Tomorrow and Beyond* (Workman), *Barlowe's Guide to Extraterrestrials* (Workman), *The Yearbook Book* (Ballantine), *Di Fate's Catalog of Science Fiction Hardware* (Workman), and *Urshurak* (Bantam), a novel by Tim and Greg Hildebrandt. He is currently writing a popular cultural analysis of cult films titled *Midnight Movies*.

Summers's packages have been honored by nominations for the American Book Award and the Hugo Award. He was Executive Art Director of Ballantine Books for four years where he created over 2,000 paperback covers. He has won every major graphics award including the coveted Gold Medal from the Society of Illustrators.

Summers has lectured at The New School for Social Research, Parson's School of Design, The School of Visual Arts, and The Fashion Institute of Technology. He was chosen as guest lecturer on illustration at UCLA and spent a week on campus last May.

Summers has appeared on the "Today" show and over 100 television and radio programs nationwide.

He is the father of two teenage girls. Summers resides in New York City.

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